

***Through the Serbian  
Campaign :: The Great  
Retreat of the Serbian Army ::  
By Gordon Gordon-Smith :: ::***

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*With a preface by*  
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WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND MAPS.

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***Through the Serbian Campaign***

TO  
THE GALLANT SERBIAN ARMY  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

## NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

IN this book I have tried to give a true and faithful picture of the second campaign of the Serbian Armies in the present war. I trust that I have done justice to the patriotism and heroism of one of the bravest peoples of Europe. I take this opportunity of tendering my sincere thanks to M. Boshkovitch, the eminent diplomatist who represents Serbia at the Court of St. James, who has kindly consented to write the preface ; to M. Pashitch, the Serbian Premier, and M. Yovan Yovanovitch, Minister of Foreign Affairs ; to M. Slobodan Yovanovitch, Chief of the Bureau of the Press, and all the members of the Headquarters Staff, for innumerable acts of kindness and courtesy during the time I spent in Serbia.

I would like also to express my thanks to Lady Paget, to Dr. Elsie Inglis, to Mrs. Hankin Hardy, to Mrs. St. Clair Stobart and to Mr. and Mrs. James Berry for material regarding the activity of the various Red Cross Units during the campaign, and to Dr. R. W. Seton-Watson, Honorary Secretary of the Serbian Relief Fund, for permission to make use of their reports on the relief work in Serbia, Corfu, Corsica and elsewhere.

## PREFACE

HAVING been asked to write a few prefatory words to this excellent book of Mr. Gordon-Smith, I have read with emotion the pages devoted to the description of the Serbian Army's retreat last autumn from the banks of the Danube and the Timok towards the Adriatic Coast.

The author, who is a veteran of English journalism, well-known in Europe and America, personally followed the principal phases of the military drama which he describes in an absorbing, clear, measured manner, stripped of all unnecessary detail which so often spoils literary compositions. He accompanied the Serbian Army in its long and painful march and gives us direct testimony to the difficulties, the almost superhuman efforts and the strength of endurance of the Serbian soldier during those terrible weeks. Gifted with remarkable powers of observation, Mr. Gordon-Smith has been able to see and to select the principal facts. On this account his book is to be particularly recommended to the reading public.

The success, certainly temporary, of the last Austro-German offensive in Serbia was only possible thanks to the perfidious attack of the Bulgarian people, aimed at Serbia's back. In order to escape the encircling grasp of these three enemies, three times greater in numbers, the Serbian Army was obliged to gradually draw back towards the southwest and abandon the Serbian territory to preserve her

existence and unity for the future liberation of their country and the collaboration in the final triumph of the Allies. This triumph is now certain and approaches surely from West and East. The advance from the South, in which the Serbian Army shall participate at the opportune moment, will complete it.

The Allies have been subjected to somewhat lively criticism on account of the misfortunes which befell Serbia, and the author of this book alludes to it in some places. Nobody could deny that in the present war errors and mistakes had been committed. *Errare humanum est*. And certainly Serbia has been in a large measure victim of those errors. In order to understand their bearing upon events in the Balkans it will always be necessary to revert to the Allies attitude towards Bulgaria during the first stages of this war. The result of this attitude was to restrict, at the most critical moments, Serbia's liberty of military action and her certain right of using freely, and in due time, all her means of defence against the evident Bulgarian menace.

But leaving this aside, did not the Allies, more particularly France and England, by their energetic efforts render it possible for the Serbian Army to break away from the perilous situation in which it found itself on the Adriatic Coast, inhospitable and bare of resources? It must not be forgotten either that, without having any formal obligation towards Serbia, England and France, since the beginning of the present war, gave her a helping hand, and as far as possible aided her to keep up the uneven fight against the forces of the Hapsburg Monarchy. In helping Serbia financially and providing her with war material and munitions they have rendered the Serbian Army capable of winning in this war the first complete victory over the common enemy. The sanguinary defeat and the complete rout of the Imperial Army in Serbia, under Field-Marshal Potiorek, in December 1914, will always remain in the annals of history as a well-deserved

humiliation inflicted on the vaingloriousness and the presumptuous brutality of a State whose foundations rest solely on injustice and violation of the rights of smaller nations who have been unfortunate enough to find themselves within her reach. The spirit of rapine and presumption have always inspired the policy of the German Powers. The same spirit predominates amongst their partners, Turks, Magyars, or Bulgars. It is not merely a coincidence that they should have found themselves so promptly united in this gigantic enterprise of spoliation and brigandage, elevated to the rank of a principle, professed publicly by statesmen, diplomats and University Professors of Germany. This harmony in mischievous activity cannot be explained solely by the presumed accordance of political interests. The more profound affinities of character must have worked to unite them with such facility in this conspiracy against civilization and the liberty of nations.

Up till now I have not mentioned Russia. This chapter would be too long if I tried to set forth her titles to the gratitude of the Serbians. We know that she was the first to rise up in the defence of menaced Serbia, and faced this frightful war rather than see the accomplishment of the great international crime, thought out and attempted by the Dual Monarchy, encouraged by Germany. Her great traditions of protector of the Christian peoples of the Balkans have been honoured once more. To the help given by her great northern sister, Serbia has always replied by devotion and sentiments of unshaken gratitude.

One of the merits of Mr. Gordon-Smith's book is precisely that he has pointed out in a great measure what the Allies have done for Serbia. Besides the qualities indicated at the commencement of this preface, this one may be added and altogether will make his book all the more interesting for the English reader.

M. S. BOSHKOVITCH.

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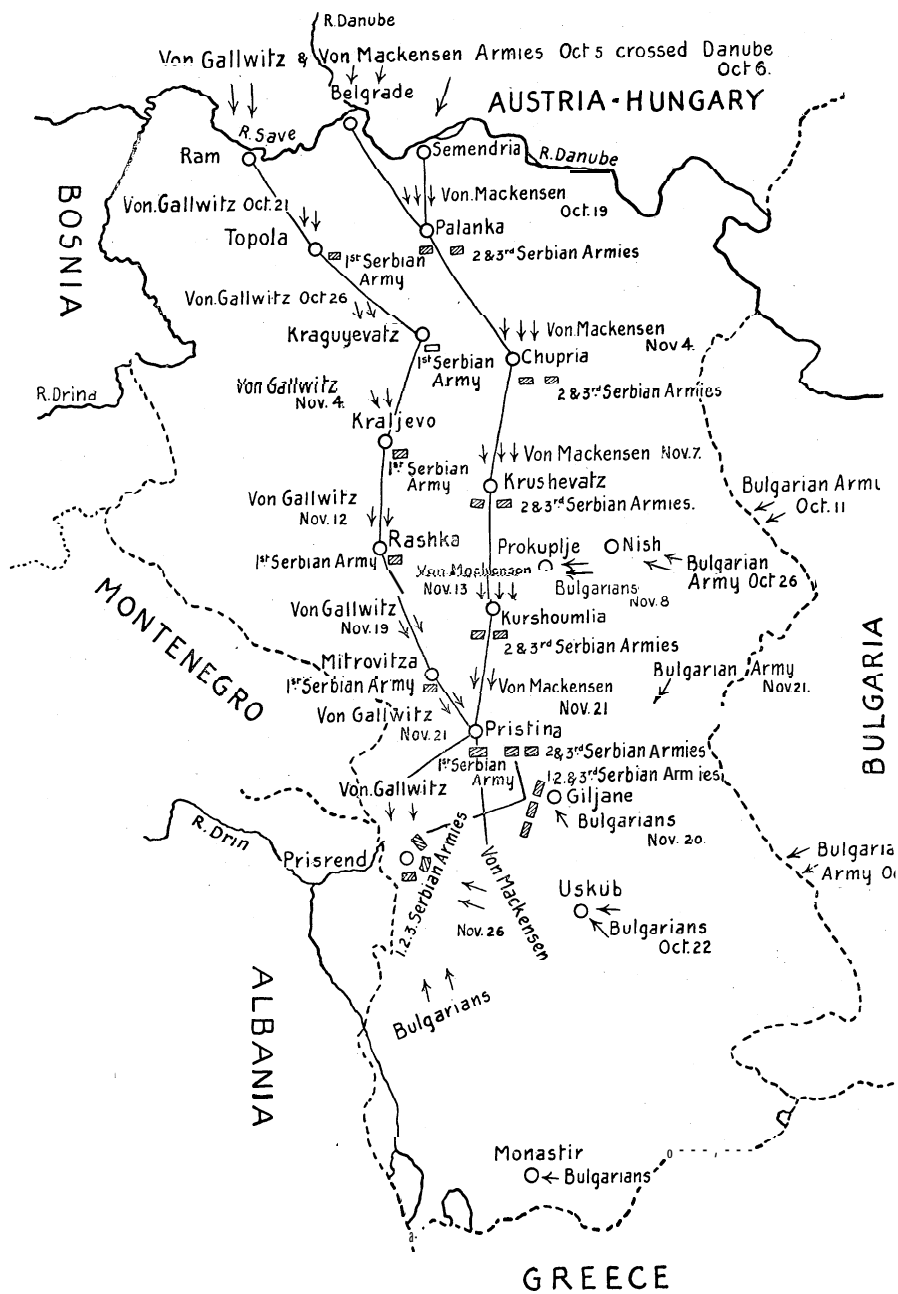
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# THROUGH THE SERBIAN CAMPAIGN

## INTRODUCTION

**I**N the whole history of the present World-War there is no more tragic episode than the second Serbian campaign, a campaign which terminated in the overrunning, by Germany and her Allies, of the whole of Serbia.

It is an episode tragically glorious for the armies of King Peter, but one which certainly will not, either diplomatically or militarily, be counted among the successes of the Quadruple Alliance. It was **characterized**, on the side of the latter, by a series of errors which had as their result the retreat into foreign territory of the Serbian Army and the abandonment of the ill-starred **Gallipoli** enterprise, rendered **hopeless** by the triumph of the Central Powers in the **Balkans**.

In order to have a clear idea of the political and **military** consequences of the second Balkan campaign we must study the situation which existed at its commencement. To completely understand this we

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must in turn go back to the “beginning of things,” i.e., the political and military constellation of the Balkan States as the result of the preceding wars.

The first of these was the war of the Balkan Confederation against Turkey. In the course of the year **1912** the Balkan States achieved what had long been regarded as impossible, the formation of a League against the common enemy, Turkey. With this end in view, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro signed an offensive and defensive treaty of alliance and on September 30th, **1912**, mobilized their armies. Twenty-four hours later the Sultan also mobilized his forces. Exactly a week later Montenegro declared war on Turkey and was, on October 18th, joined by her Allies.

After a campaign of three months' duration the success of the armies of the Balkan League was such that Turkey, on December 3rd, signed an armistice at Tchataldja. A Peace Conference was held in London but no agreement could be reached and hostilities were resumed. On April 20th a second armistice was negotiated and a fresh Conference held which, this time, reached a successful conclusion, the Treaty of London being signed on May 30th, **1913**. The victory of the Balkan League was complete, Turkey was practically driven out of the Balkans, the Allies seizing all her territories right up to Tchataldja, a few short miles from Constantinople.

This marvellous result was not received with unmixed satisfaction by all the -Great -Powers.

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Germany and Austria regarded it with ill-concealed displeasure. The latter State saw its dream of 'extending its territories to the ~~Æ~~gean shattered by the seizure by Serbia of the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, the narrow tongue of Turkish territory which ran up to the frontier of Bosnia and promised a path of invasion when the break-up of the Turkish Empire should offer an opportunity for Austria to realize her ambitions of seizing Salonica. Germany saw her communications- with the Ottoman Empire (which the Kaiser had for twenty years been drawing more and -more into the orbit of German political ambitions) seriously menaced by a Confederation of the Balkan States and, the consequent creation of a military force which would be perfectly capable, not only of holding its own against Austria-Hungary, but of wringing concessions from that country for the freeing of the sections of the Balkan race still under- the yoke of the Dual Monarchy.

It was clear both to Vienna and Berlin, that the close union of the Balkan peoples, forged in " blood and iron " by their brilliant and victorious campaign against Turkey, must, at all costs, be broken up. This campaign had indeed been almost too successful. It had. succeeded beyond the wildest hopes of the Confederation, and the amount of captured- terri- t&y far exceeded its previsions. and expectations. This was the opportunity of the Central Powers. They at once began to intrigue, to sow dissension among the Balkan Allies by awakening appetites and

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desires which could only be realized at the expense of the common peace;

They found a favourable *terrain* at Sofia. The Bulgarian nation, intoxicated by its victory, lent a willing ear to the insidious counsels of the Ballplatz and -put -forward excessive claims. for territorial concessions in the conquered Turkish Provinces.. These were resisted by the Serbians who took their stand on the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance in which the main principles of the division of the conquered territory. were laid down. It was further provided in that Treaty. that in case of disagreement, the points in dispute should be submitted to the arbitration of. the Tsar of Russia, whose decision both sides undertook. to accept. ,

It soon became clear that Bulgaria had no intention of- fulfilling this part of her treaty obligations, and during the negotiations kept raising difficulty. after difficulty. At the same time, she kept secretly massing her -forces so to be in a position of superiority should there be an appeal to armed force.

Then came the crowning act of treason. -During the night of the 29th to 30th June, 1913, the Bulgarian troops, without the. slightest warning, made a sudden attack on their Serbian and Greek Allies. Fortunately for Serbia her soldiers come' of a sturdy race, and the first moment of surprise past, they defended themselves with vigour. Twenty-four hours; later, both they and the Greeks, furious with wrath at this -treacherous attack, took the offensive in their

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turn. Their generous indignation so fired their courage that the Bulgarians were driven from position after position. Bulgaria's difficulties became her enemies' opportunity. Roumania, which had long demanded a rectification of her frontier with Bulgaria and the cession of the Dobrudja province, took advantage of her embarrassments to press her claims, and when these were resisted, she too mobilized her army, forcibly seized that province and marched on Sofia. Turkey, too, saw a chance of avenging at least a part of her defeat, and invaded the territory she had just lost and recaptured, Adrianople.

Threatened thus from all sides, and with the Roumanian army a few miles from the gates of Sofia, Bulgaria was forced to sue for peace, and on August 6th, 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest was signed, and peace was once more re-established in the Balkans. This was interrupted for a few weeks by hostilities between the Serbians and the Albanians which began in September and led to a slight extension of the Serbian frontier in the direction of Albania.

. But though the Central Powers were thus disappointed in their expectations as to the results of the second Balkan War, they had succeeded in their 'main object which was the breaking up of the Balkan Confederation.' They had sowed seeds of undying hate between the Bulgarians and the other Balkan States and created; at Sofia, a new centre for **Austro-German** influence. The fashion in which Bulgaria had openly flouted the wishes of Russia



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and insulted the Tsar by rejecting his offices as arbiter between the Balkan peoples had completely estranged the Petrograd Government. Bulgaria's German-born King was known to be the zealous agent of German influence and secretly hostile to the Powers of the Entente. So notorious was this that Serbia and Greece, for their common protection, signed a strictly defensive Treaty of Alliance, each undertaking to come to the assistance of the other if attacked by a third Power. This treaty was negotiated by M. Boshkovitch (the present Serbian Minister-in-London) and M. Coromilos, and was signed by M. Boshkovitch and M. Venizelos. Such was the situation in the Balkans during the months which preceded the outbreak of the present world-conflict. It must be carefully kept in mind as it explains much regarding the action of the Central Powers and renders still more astounding the errors of the diplomacy of the Quadruple Alliance.

But if outward peace reigned in the Balkans the Serbians had no doubt as to the sentiments of the Central Powers, especially Austria-Hungary, towards them. Austria, which had had nearly half her army mobilized during the Balkan conflict, was a constant menace and the Belgrade Government knew that an attack from that side was daily becoming more and more probable, an attack which everyone saw would be the signal for a general European conflagration. All that was wanting was the pretext. This was found in the assassination on June 28th,

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1914, at Sarajevo,, the capital of Bosnia, of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. This was alleged by Austria to have been plotted in Belgrade with the knowledge and connivance of Serbian officials. Then followed the famous ultimatum, probably the most insolent diplomatic document ever penned, presented by the Austrian Minister at Belgrade to King Peter's Government. It was clear that it was not meant to be accepted. Germany and Austria had decided that the hour for the war they had long been plotting had struck. The action of the Ballplatz was merely intended to *dklancer le mouvement*.

The declaration of war by -Austria-Hungary on July 28th, 1914, was immediately followed by an attempt to invade Serbia;

From the very first the inability of the Austrians to overcome the resistance of the Serbs was manifest. All their attempts to cross the Danube and the Save were repulsed. It was only when they made a further attempt from the Bosnian side of the Save that they succeeded in passing on to Serbian territory and captured Shabatz. But their success was shortlived. A few days later, by the battle of Tzer the Serbs drove back the invaders and hurled them in confusion across the Save and Drina.

Unfortunately for Serbia this effort exhausted their stock of munitions. When the Austrians realized this they returned to the attack. As the Serbs were without shells for their artillery or cartridges for their rifles they were forced to [give way and had to retreat

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from north-western Serbia to Rudnik. This entailed the evacuation of Belgrade. This discouraged the army and thousands of men returned to their homes. At the psychological moment, however, the Allies were able to come to the aid of the Serbs and **repro-**vision them with munitions. Instantly the whole situation changed. The Serbian Army under **Field-**Marshal Mishitch (who showed on this occasion a great spirit of initiation and decision) had shrunk to less than one hundred thousand men. They attacked the 400,000 Austrians on the Rudnik-Souvorov line with such vigour that they hurled them back in confusion. In a few days Serbian territory was cleared of the Austrians. A proof of the national spirit was seen in the fact that the army, which was less than one hundred thousand strong when it began the attack, counted a quarter of a million bayonets by the time it reached the Drina, the Serbian peasants streaming back to the colours the instant they heard that the munitions had arrived. Over 60,000 prisoners were taken by the Serbs, together with an immense amount of war material, guns, munitions, pontoon trains, field telegraph material, baggage train, food stuffs and war stores of every kind.

So complete was the catastrophe that the Austrians, for the time being, abandoned all further attack on Serbia and that country could enjoy a much needed period of comparative repose. But the trials of **the** nation were not yet at an end. An epidemic of typhus, which had broken out among the Austrian

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troops at Valjevo during the occupation, began to spread all over the country. The Serbian soldiers, exhausted by three years' campaigning, fell victims to it by thousands. In the towns and villages, crowded with fugitives from the invaded districts, the disease made frightful ravages. It was the 'terrible variety known as spotted typhus. The existing- sanitary organizations proved utterly unable to cope with 'the outbreak.- Hundreds died on public roads and in the streets of towns,- in fact, scenes were-witnessed such as had not been chronicled since the outbreaks of the **Black Death** in the Middle Ages.

**The** Serbian Government appealed for aid- to their Allies, who responded nobly to their call. France, Britain and Russia sent hundreds of Red Cross Units. The Scottish Women's Ambulance, and the- organizations under Lady **Paget**, Mrs. **Hankin Hardy**, Dr. and Mrs. -Berry and Mrs. St. Clair Stobart worked night and day among the stricken people. They fought the outbreak foot by foot with admirable courage. Many doctors and nurses **fell** victims to their devotion. But science and heroism prevailed. Slowly but surely the number of cases **diminished**, and by the end of April the last traces of the epidemic 'had bee-n stamped out. But the toll of victims was enormous, over 70,000 succumbing to the terrible scourge, and this in a, country whose population had died by tens of thousands in three years of ceaseless war.

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Meanwhile the war was being continued -with undiminished vigour on other European fronts.. In France; after the victory of the Marne, the Germans had “ dug themselves in.” A line of trenches such as the world has never. seen, had been constructed from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier. These were manned by two million men on either side and the position reduced to one of “ stalemate.”

(That this was so has since been proved by the failure of the efforts made by both sides to break through their ‘opponents’ lines. The German attack at Ypres had as its only result the practical annihilation of the Corps of Prussian Guards. The British attempts to break through the German lines at Neuve Chapelle and Loos did not completely succeed. The French attack in Champagne, though made after weeks of careful preparation, only resulted in the capture of a few square miles of territory. The Germans were driven back but their line remained unbroken. The German attempt to force the French lines at Verdun has been equally unsuccessful, though preceded by a preparation in which every expedient known to military science was used.)

On the Austro-Italian frontier a similar situation existed. After months of tireless effort the Italian Army had not advanced twenty miles into the enemy’s country. The French and Italian lines of trenches were linked up by the formidable line of fortifications which., the Swiss Army had thrown up to discourage any attempt on the part of France or Germany to

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reach **each** other across the territory of the Confederation. An uninterrupted line of trenches, therefore, ran from the North Sea to the Adriatic.

On the other side of the Adriatic the line of **defence** of the Allies was continued. by Montenegro and Serbia to the point where Serbian territory reached the Roumanian frontier. Roumania, though neutral in the struggle, had, like Switzerland, practically mobilized her army since the beginning of the war, and fortified her frontiers from end to end.

On the other side of Roumania began the Russian line of entrenchments running from Bessarabia to the Baltic. Germany and Austria were thus surrounded by a circle of steel on which bristled ten million bayonets. It was for the Central Powers. a question of life and death to break this *encercllement* which was slowly but surely strangling them. France, Italy and Russia (in spite of a momentary German success in the latter country, which -has only had the effect of widening, but not breaking the circle), were daily increasing the pressure. Turkey, cut off from all communication with the Central Powers and from the outside world, was daily in danger of collapse. This would have meant the fall of Constantinople, the opening of the Dardanelles, and the reprovisioning of Russia. with munitions and war stores of all kinds, the want of which had rendered possible. the momentary success of Austro-German arms in Poland.

It was clear to the meanest intelligence that the

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prevention of **this was** a vital question for the Central Powers. The Ottoman Government was running short of munitions, and if the supply was not renewed the success of the 'attack on the peninsula of **Gallipoli** was certain. With the entry of the British Fleet into the Sea of Marmora the fate -of Constantinople was sealed.

In order to prevent this Germany and Austria, in the spring of **1915**, began to mass troops in Hungary with a view to forcing their way through Serbia to Constantinople. In the month of July the French aviation service attached to the Serbian Army reported. the commencement of this concentration. The Belgrade Government saw the danger. The military position in Serbia, in spite of the fact that every instant of the six months' respite from actual warfare had been utilized to rest and recruit the army, to call out and train the new "**classe**," to refill the depleted arsenals, and to accumulate food stuffs and war stores of **all** kinds, was a critical one.

When, therefore, in July, **1915**, it became evident that the country was threatened with a fresh attack and that this time the Austrian Army was to be reinforced by German troops, the Serbian Government. was of opinion that it could no longer resist the aggression single-handed. It therefore appealed to the Allies for help.

It is from this moment that the greatest military and diplomatic failure made by the Allies in the present war **dates**. Instead of themselves sending

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the military aid demanded by the Serbians, the Russian, British and French Governments declared they would obtain this from **Bulgaria**. This reply caused consternation in Serbia. It was in vain, however, that M. Pashitch and his colleagues pointed out that Bulgaria was their worst enemy, that she had at the instigation of Austria and Germany, neutralized the effects of the victorious war against **Turkey**, by abandoning her Greek and Serbian allies, and had treacherously tried to stab them in the back.; their objections were brushed aside and the Allies began negotiations with the Sofia Government. Serbia was to be left to defend the Danube against the coming **Austro-German** invasion while Bulgaria was to be induced to march on Constantinople as the ally of the Entente Powers.

In order to get Bulgaria to do this the Allies offered to obtain for her from the Bucharest Government the retrocession of the Dobrudja Province, wrested from her by Roumania, after her defeat by Serbia and Greece ; from Serbia, a large portion of Macedonia and the cession by Greece of the towns of Cavalla; Drama and **Seres**. If the Allies had desired to deliberately cool all enthusiasm for their cause in **these States** they would not have proceeded otherwise. M. Radoslavoff, the astute Bulgarian Premier, pretended that a basis of settlement might be found on these lines and embarked on a series of deliberately long drawn-out negotiations.

**It was** at this moment that, I left Switzerland, where



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I then had been following the progress of the French campaign in Alsace, for the Serbian capital which had been temporarily established at Nish. *En route* I stopped at Rome to see M. Coromilos, the Greek Minister to the Quirinal. M. Coromilos had been Minister of Foreign Affairs during the war with Turkey and during the Greco-Serbo-Bulgarian War which followed it. He it was who negotiated the famous treaty creating the Balkan League, which made the victory over Turkey possible, and later, the Greco-Serbian Treaty which Greece failed to observe when the occasion arose. He has a knowledge of Balkan affairs such as few European statesmen possess,

I found him aghast at the policy being pursued by the Allies. "What does it all mean?" he asked me. "We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Bulgaria is pledged up to the hilt to the Central Powers. She has asked and obtained from them a loan of 250,000,000 francs in gold; she has come to terms with Turkey, the Power the Allies expect her to attack; and has received from her a cession of territory. She is, to our certain knowledge, preparing night and day for war. We keep sending dispatch after dispatch, telegram after telegram to this effect to London, Paris and Petrograd. The Serbian and Roumanian Governments are doing the same, but nothing we can say or do has the slightest effect. The Allies inform us that Bulgaria is the most loyal, honest and upright nation in the world; and that her support of their cause is beyond all question.

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We know that the contrary is the case, but MM. Sazonoff, Delcasse and Sir Edward Grey turn a deaf ear to all we say. It is the most extraordinary situation I have ever seen and can only end in disaster."

Ten days later I saw M. Venizelos in Athens and he confirmed every word M. Coromilos had said; "We are completely at a loss," he declared, "to understand the aberration of the Allies. But to all the Balkan Governments tell them they turn a deaf ear. They drag on negotiations with our worst enemies when a child could see that they are being fooled by the wily Bulgarian Premier, who is acting under orders from Berlin and Vienna. He is dragging out the pretended negotiations in order to give the Central Powers time to concentrate their armies against Serbia."

When I reached Nish I found that consternation reigned. The Government was in despair at the diplomatic action of the Allies. Then the moment arrived when, the Austro-German armies being concentrated, Bulgaria threw off the mask and mobilized her army. And then came the crowning error of the Allies. Field-Marshal Putnik, the Chief of Staff of the Serbian Army, telegraphed to London, Paris and Petrograd asking permission to march the Serbian army across the frontier and attack the Bulgarians before they had completed their concentration. He declared the Serbian Army would be in Sofia in five days. Bulgaria being disposed of, Serbia could

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then turn her full strength against Austria and Germany.

Not only was permission refused but it was declared that the Allies had the astonishing conviction that the Bulgarian mobilization was not directed against her and she was warned that if she broke the Balkan Peace she would do so at her own risk and peril. On receiving this extraordinary communication, M. Pashitch, the Serbian Premier, in his loyalty to the Quadruple Entente, showed himself even *plus royaliste que le roi* and ordered the Serbian Army, in order to avoid all danger of a Serbo-Bulgarian "incident," to withdraw five kilometres from the Bulgarian frontier (thereby giving up the important position of Saint Nicholas which the Bulgarians occupied without firing a shot) and announced that any Serbian officer who should provoke any frontier incident would be pitilessly shot. Having thus tied the unfortunate Serbia hand and foot the Allies looked on helplessly while the Central Powers and their Bulgarian ally proceeded to cut her throat.

A week later came the inevitable crash. Three hundred thousand Austro-German troops began a tremendous attack upon the Danube front, while four hundred thousand Bulgarians were hurled across the western frontier. Field-Marshal- Putnik with his two hundred and fifty thousand Serbs performed prodigies of valour. For two long months he faced overwhelming odds. Cut off from all communication with the outside world the Serbs fought with

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the courage of despair. But human strength has its limits and on November 24<sup>th</sup>, the wreck of King Peter's army left Serbian territory and began its fateful march across the mountains into Albania. The triumphant invaders were masters of Serbia. Direct communication was established between Berlin and Constantinople and thousands of tons of ammunition were poured into Turkey. The first result of this was the abandonment by the Allies of the now hopeless enterprise in the Dardanelles. A month later Montenegro fell, Albania was invaded, and the remnants of the Serbian Army driven to take refuge in C o r f u .

Such were the fruits of the incredible errors of the diplomacy of the Allies. The Salonica expedition, as far as the saving of Serbia was concerned, was foredoomed to failure from the first. It was *la moutarde après le dîner*, as our French friends would say.

But it is when we consider what would have happened if the Allies had listened to the counsels of the Balkan Governments that the colossal nature of the errors committed becomes apparent. As far back as July, when the Austro-German menace first became apparent, the Serbian Government urged the Allies to send a quarter of a million men to the Danube front. If this had been done the Austro-German armies would have found themselves opposed by half a million men (250,000 Anglo-French troops and 250,000 Serbs). With such a guarantee

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Roumania would not have hesitated to move.. This would have meant an additional 600,000 men at the disposal of the Allies, making a total of eleven hundred thousand bayonets on the Danube front. Under these circumstances M. Venizelos, who was then in power, would have forced King Constantine's hand and 300,000 Greeks would have swelled the forces of the Allies.

If this had taken place, Bulgaria would not have dared to move, or, if she had, would have been disposed of at short notice. The result would have been the creation of a fourth front for the Central Powers which they would not have defended with less than a million men. And *these they had not got*. Then would have followed the -march across the Hungarian *pusta* to Budapest.

Once the Allies were in possession of the Hungarian capital the position of the Austrian Army facing the Italians in the Trentino would have become untenable. The Italian Army would have poured across into Austrian territory. With Vienna menaced from two sides Austrian resistance would have been-broken and Germany would have been face to face, single-handed, with Europe in arms, and defeat in a few weeks or at most months would have been certain.

That this result was not achieved is due to the fact that the diplomats of the Allies allowed themselves to be deceived by an astute politician like M. Radoslavoff and his unscrupulous German-born sovereign. One of the bravest and most liberty-

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loving nations of Europe has been, for the time being at least, wiped out of existence and abandoned 'to the horrors of invasion and occupation. The French nation at once drew the logical conclusion from the errors committed. But the Allies do not seem to have profited by the lesson as the crushing of Serbia was followed by the occupation of Montenegro and the invasion of Albania without their making any apparent effort to save these countries from their fate. Such is a brief summary of the second Serbian campaign which in this volume I propose to describe in detail.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SERBIAN ARMY

THE Serbian Army at the outbreak of the second campaign consisted of about 250,000 men. It was divided into five armies. The First Army was under the command of the Voivode, or Field-Marshal, Zhivoin Mishitch, the Second under the Voivode Stepanovitch, the Third under General Yurishitch-Sturm, the Defence of Belgrade under General Zhivkovitch and the Troops of the New Territories (with centre at Uskub) under General Petar Boyovitch.

The composition of these armies varied according to circumstances, divisions being transported from one army to the other as necessity arose. Thus the famous Division of the Shumadia (so-called because it is recruited in the country of that name) commanded by Colonel Bozha Terzitch (at present Serbian Minister of War) at the beginning of the campaign formed part of the Second Army. Later it was transferred to the Third Army, and finally, toward the end of October, was sent to join the Defence of

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Belgrade. Each active Division (First “ Ban ”) had its divisions of reserve known as Second and Third “ Ban.”

The recruiting of the Serbian Army is purely territorial, the men of the **Defence** of Belgrade being drawn from the capital and the environs, those of the Division of Shumadia from the country of Shumadia, the **Division** of the Danube from the country on that river, the Division of **Timok** from the province of that name on the Roumanian frontier, etc. The men of a company will often all come from the same village and a regiment from the same district. The only exception to this rule is the Combined Division (commanded by General M. Rashitch) which is composed, as its name implies, of men from every part of Serbia. It is counted as one of the corps *d'élite* of the Serbian Army.

This system of recruiting the army makes for great cohesion among the troops, as the men, being closely allied by race and in many instances blood relations, stand shoulder to shoulder in moments of stress and danger in a **manner** they might not do if drawn together from far distant provinces. It further allows of **speedy** mobilization in a country none too well provided with railways and other means of rapid transport and concentration.

The system, at the same time, has its drawbacks. Serbia is essentially a country of peasant proprietors,



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and the Serbian Army is to an overwhelming degree a peasant army. A peasant army has always a double patriotism, one local, the other national. As long as his farm lies behind him the Serbian peasant fights like a lion, but once he is being forced to retreat beyond it and it is in the occupation of the enemy, half his interest in the struggle is gone. I do not for a moment mean to say that he ceases to fight bravely, as *his national* patriotism is also very great, but there is a diminution in his *élan*. That is why the tactics imposed on the Serbian General Staff by the Allies, after the Austro-German forces crossed the Danube, were the worst possible for such an army. Their instructions were that Field-Marshal Putnik should keep contact with the enemy and delay their advance as much as possible in order to give the Allies in Salonica time to come to his assistance. In other words, they were to try a Serbian repetition of the tactics of General Joffre before the victory of the Marne. They were warned on no account to risk everything on a pitched battle.

These were tactics entirely foreign to the nature of the Serbian soldier. He is eminently suited for the attack.- He is most formidable with the “ bayonet and the butt ” and has little comprehension of the necessities of tactics and strategy. When he sees one position after another being abandoned for strategic reasons and mile after mile of territory falling into the

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hands of the invader he becomes discouraged. He still fights bravely (up to the very last the Serbs fought with courage), but his *élan* and his enthusiasm are damped. The Serbian Staff faithfully followed the counsels of the Allies from Belgrade to Pristina, that is to say, they retreated, facing triple odds, performing prodigies of valour for nearly two months, and at the end of that time the Allies at Salonica were as unable to come to their assistance as the first day.

The Serbian soldier possesses a strong dash of Oriental fatalism, a heritage, probably, of five hundred years of Turkish rule. This enables him to bear up under circumstances which would discourage many European troops. He is docile and easily accepts military discipline. . In physique the Serbs are a strong and sturdy race and accept uncomplainingly privations such as would drive other armies to revolt or despair. They content themselves with the simplest fare (I have seen men marching and fighting for days on a few cobs of raw maize and a raw cabbage or two), and have marvellous powers of resistance to climatic conditions, supporting equally well extremes of heat and cold.

But what distinguishes the Serbian Army from all others is its methods of transport. The roads, or rather- the want of them, renders automobile and even horse-drawn transport out of the question. The patient ox is the pivot of everything in the Serbian

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Army. The baggage wagons, the pontoon train and the artillery, even the field guns, are for the most part ox-drawn. Nothing else could get through the seas of mud *en évidence* everywhere after any rainfall. As the existing railways are all single track they do not render the same services as the double-track railways in other countries. The burden thrown on wheeled transport is therefore much greater than elsewhere.

As it is the ox that sets the pace the marching speed of the Serbian Army is painfully slow, from two and a half to three miles an hour. When field batteries are drawn by bullocks the development of a battle is a very slow affair. There are no horse batteries changing position at the gallop or thundering along the roads. But as the enemy, as soon as he enters Serbian territory, must also abandon horse traction if he desires to make any progress at all everybody is on an equal footing.

The Army Service Corps is made up of peasants' carts, requisitioned by the military authorities. They are of all sorts and sizes, some in good repair, others threatening ruin or -appearing to do so. Some have four oxen and some have two. Some have tilts, others have none, or mere apologies for covers in tattered canvas. The "Komordji," or drivers, rarely wear any uniform beyond the Serbian military cap, but tramp alongside their teams in the russet-brown homespun costume universally worn. Many of the

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men had been 'out with their teams since the first Turkish War and had tramped in rain and shine, in summer heat and winter cold, from the plains of **Thrace** to the frontiers of Hungary. They had all left their farms to be cultivated by their wives and children, whom they had not seen for many a weary month.

But in spite of the patriarchal appearance given to a Serbian army on the march by the thousands of **ox-**wagons, the droves of sheep and the countless vehicles piled high with hay and straw, it is an admirable fighting machine, and could hold its own, in its own country, against the most up-to-date adversary.

Its staff officers are well trained and have learnt their *métier* in the armies of France, Germany or Russia. They- are well-equipped and admirably mounted and do **their** work in smart and business-like fashion. The regimental officers seem also **well-**trained, though many belong to the peasant class. There is certainly no **more** democratic army in Europe, and in Serbia it is certain that every soldier " carries his marshal's baton in his knapsack."

The Commander-in-Chief ` is Prince Alexander, Crown Prince and Prince Regent. For some months past the health of the aged **King** prevented him exercising active command. But His Majesty is heart and soul with his troops, and made a point of moving

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everywhere with the army to encourage them' by his presence. Wherever he went he was received with boundless enthusiasm, His courage and absolute indifference to danger excited general admiration. He was constantly to be found where the shells were falling thickest. It is certainly no sinecure to be an officer of King Peter's suite.

Prince Alexander comes only second to his father in the affection of the Army. Though only twenty-seven years of age he is already a veteran, having learnt his *métier* in three successive wars. His military talents are said to be of a high order. As he was at the same time Regent of Serbia, his task during the campaign was no light one, as, in addition to his military duties, he had to take part in the civil administration of the country and to attend to delicate diplomatic negotiations with foreign Powers.

But the brain of the Serbian Army is Field-Marshal Putnik, the Chief of the General Staff. It is curious that from the beginning of the war till October last, the Allies had each had but one generalissimo, while Germany had a succession of popular idols at the head of her armies, who all, more or less, proved to have "feet of clay." Von Kluck, von Moltke, von Mackensen, von Gallwitz, and half a score of others have had their passing moments of popularity. The only German general who continues to excite popular enthusiasm is Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. He

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possesses those qualities of the old swashbuckler type which appeal to the popular imagination. But on the side of the Allies no nation possesses a leader who enjoys the confidence and veneration of the entire people to a greater extent than does General Putnik, the Chief of Staff of the Serbian forces..

The future generalissimo was born in 1847, and began his military career as a cadet of the Military Academy of Belgrade. When the Turco-Serbian War of 1876 broke out he was still a first lieutenant. A year later, when Russia took the field against Turkey, he had been promoted captain, and he went through that campaign as company leader. When Serbia in 1885 declared war on Bulgaria Radomir Putnik was lieutenant-colonel and Chief of Staff of the first "Ban" of the Danube Division. On being promoted colonel he became Chief of the General Staff, and shortly after was promoted to the command of the division of the Shumadia.

On account of his political sympathies he was forced by King Milan to relinquish his command. From that moment until the accession of King Peter in 1903 Colonel Putnik lived in retirement and devoted himself exclusively to military studies. When the Karageorgevitchs remounted the throne of their ancestors King Peter recalled Colonel Putnik to active service and promoted him to the rank of general. Since that moment Putnik's prestige has not ceased

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to increase. When he was not in active command of a division he held the portfolio of Minister of War.

Small and spare of stature, General Putnik has not that outward expression of physical vigour which one associates with military energy. His grey beard, trimmed to a point, is whitened by the silver threads of long nights of anxious vigil and the weight of illness. Only the two vertical lines between his heavy eyebrows denote the iron will of the Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Army. When his eyes light up his whole face is illuminated with a flash of energy.

When the first Balkan War, the campaign against Turkey, was declared, General Putnik was naturally put at the head of the Army. On this occasion King Peter revived an old Serbian title. He made the general a "Voivode," which signifies "dux," or leader, in the classical acceptance of the word. The functions which were attached to the title in the Middle Ages were equivalent to those of the modern commander of an army corps. The equivalent to this rank in other armies is that of Field-Marshal,

The man who since his youngest years has not ceased to awaken ever-growing confidence and devotion among his countrymen has a constitution undermined by illness. His advanced age forces him to take every precaution. Attacked by severe, chronic asthma, he rarely leaves his room, living in an apartment kept constantly at hothouse temperature. His

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manner is brusque, and on all occasions he expresses himself with outspoken soldierly frankness.

From the point of view of military science the distinguishing characteristic of General Putnik is his marvellous memory for topography. Thanks to this precious faculty, without quitting his room he can follow and direct the movements of the troops under his command, and even *manœuvre* them with a perfect knowledge of the country in which they are operating. His soldiers have an absolutely blind confidence in his powers.

General Putnik began life a poor man, and poor he has remained.. After the conclusion of the first Balkan War, in recognition of the immense services he had rendered his country, a number of wealthy Serbians desired to present him with a fortune. This General Putnik refused. "I thank you," he said ; "your offer has deeply touched me. But what I have done does not require any material reward. I am poor, I have always been poor, and poor I will remain. I only ask one thing. I have many children. If ever one of them should be in need of help I hope that in memory of me he will find a helping hand."

At the present moment the Voivode is literally adored by the whole Army. The Crown Prince surrounds him with every care. Nothing is left undone to promote the well-being of the man who to-day incarnates the soul of the Serbian nation.



## CHAPTER II

### THE AUSTRO-GERMAN AND BULGARIAN ARMIES

**A**FTER the rout of the Austrian Army under Field-Marshal von Potiorek in December, 1914, by the Serbians, the forces of the Dual Monarchy made no further attempt to invade Serbia. They merely kept a few regiments on the Danube front to oppose any possible attempt by King Peter's troops to invade Hungary, while a dozen or so batteries kept up a desultory artillery duel with the Serbian guns defending the Save and the Danube. As Serbia was in the throes of the terrible typhus outbreak, the Army was not in a condition to undertake an offensive movement, even if such had been planned or intended.

This condition of things continued until the early summer of 1915. The respite was a most welcome one to the Serbian Army, exhausted by three years' constant fighting. It is even questionable if this period of truce might not have continued indefinitely if it had not been for the critical position of Turkey. That. Power was facing the Russian Army in the Caucasus and the France-British force operating in

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the Dardanelles. The Turks were running short of ammunition and war stores of all kinds. This state of affairs had been brought about by the refusal of Roumania, in the spring of 1915, to allow any further supplies for the Turks to cross her territory. The collapse of Turkey would have been a veritable disaster for Germany, as it would have had as its first result the opening of the Dardanelles. This would have allowed Russia to receive the munitions, the want of which was paralysing her operations on the Polish- front and in the Carpathians.

It therefore became a vital matter for Germany to come to the aid of her Turkish ally. The only way this could be done was by forcing her way through Serbia to Bulgaria and thence to Constantinople. For this a German Army was necessary, and this for two reasons. Firstly, after the rout of the Austrian Army in December, it was doubtful if Austrian soldiers could be got to stand up against the soldiers of King Peter, and secondly, the Dual Monarchy had difficulty in finding the men. Not that the Emperor Francis Joseph did not dispose of hundreds of thousands of troops. He had large reserves, but unfortunately he could not use them.

This was due to the heterogeneous composition of his Empire. Prince Metternich, in the 'fifties declared, speaking of Italy, "*Ce n'est pas un pays, c'est une expression géographique.*" This is to-day

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equally true of the Dual Monarchy. Its curious composition presents a complicated problem for its General Staff. It is impossible to send Croatian or Bosnian soldiers against Serbia, or men from the **Trentino** and Tyrol against Italy, or Poles into **Galicia**, or employ Bohemians against Russia. They would desert *en masse* to the enemy. Austria had already had proof of this in the first Serbian campaign when whole companies of Croatians, with their officers and equipment, surrendered without firing a shot. Thirty thousand Austrian Croatians and Bosnians **taken** prisoners in Poland by the Russians asked to be sent to Serbia to fight with their brothers-in-race against Austria. Austria could not even count on her Poles and Bohemians to fight against Serbs. It is impossible to **count** on Slav troops to operate against a Slav country.

If then Germany desired to crush Serbia and **effect** her junction with the Bulgarians, it was clear she must herself undertake the invasion of Serbia. The importance she attached to it was shown by the choice of the -generals entrusted with the command of the troops. The commander-in-chief was the famous Field-Marshal von Mackensen and his principal lieutenant was General von Gallwitz. The leading role played in the. great war is a signal proof of the former's talents, for it was by sheer merit that he forced himself to the front. It is notorious that

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he was *persona ingrātissima* with the Kaiser, who dislikes men of strong character around him, men who refuse to play the courtier to the War-Lord. General von Mackensen had been commander of the army corps which had its headquarters in Dantzic when the Crown Prince was appointed Colonel of the Deaths-Head Hussars in garrison in that city. He proved a most difficult and insubordinate officer, and came repeatedly in conflict with General von Mackensen. At first the Kaiser supported the latter's authority, but later on the Crown Prince won him over to his side with the result that General von Mackensen resigned his command.' He was living in retirement when the war broke out. Of course, in common with all other generals judged physically fit, he was recalled to active service. His brilliant campaign in Poland is in everybody's memory, a campaign which earned him his marshal's baton. The decision of the Great General Staff to entrust him with the command of the army marching on Constantinople was a clear proof of the enormous importance the Germans attached to the success of the campaign.

General von Gallwitz is a worthy assistant to his chief. He is known to be a soldier of great energy and decision of character and a tactician of great skill. The choice of these men proved that the Kaiser intended to reach Constantinople *coûte que coûte*.

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But if the leaders were excellent it is more- than could be said of the rank and file. The quality of the troops under the command of Field-Marshal von Mackensen is a proof of the fact that as far back as July last the Germans were beginning to run short of men. The 200,000 men the Germans put in the field were brought together from all the fronts. There were men from Warsaw, Lodz and Brest-Litovsk fighting side by side with units from Arras, Ypres and Champagne. The quality was miserable. During the campaign I had an opportunity of seeing hundreds of German prisoners. I invariably found them to be youths of seventeen or eighteen years and men of over forty. They were pale-faced and narrow-chested, a class of men who, twelve months before, would not have passed the doctor. I even saw one man who had only three fingers on his right hand. A French surgeon told me he had treated a man, who was a typewriter with the staff, who was deaf and dumb.

The only man of really good physique and soldierly appearance I saw was a non-commissioned officer, but then he was a professional soldier with twelve years' service to his credit. He told me that the officers had informed their men that the Serbians would bolt at the first sight of a Prussian helmet. They had been not a little astonished when the Serbians came at them with the bayonet and hurled

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regiment after regiment into the Danube. At Krushevatz I met a prisoner who did not look a day beyond sixteen years. His *pickelhaube* was so big that it came down to his ears. He told me that he was seventeen and a half years old, but I doubt it. He certainly looked a round-faced schoolboy.

It was with such a *matériel* that Field-Marshal von Mackensen invaded Serbia. Of the 100,000 Austrians little need be said. They were used to garrison the captured towns and guard communications. Their leader knew better than send them against Serbian troops. The fear felt by them for their conquerors of eight months before would probably have caused a second *débâcle*.

But unfortunately for the Serbians it was not on his infantry that Field-Marshal von Mackensen relied, but on his artillery and machine guns. For every Serbian battery the Germans had three, and while the Serbs had a machine-gun section per battalion.. the Germans had one per company. When a force outnumbers its opponent by three to one, the quality of the infantry becomes of secondary importance. A pale and narrow-chested soldier in a turning movement is just as good as a lifeguardsman, and when an army finds its rear threatened, the quality of the troops operating does not count. In a country cut up into watertight compartments by

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ranges of mountains, a small force is more handicapped than when operating in the open country. With the possibility of deploying on a front twice as large as that of the Serbians, it was possible for the Germans to continually threaten the flanks of the Serbian Army, whose rear was constantly menaced by the Bulgarian Army.

The army of King Ferdinand entered upon the campaign with every advantage on its side. It mustered nearly 400,000 men, against whom the Serbians could oppose barely 150,000. They had had a rest of nearly two years since the conclusion of the second Balkan War, and had time to thoroughly re-organize and re-equip their army. Germany had in August made them a loan of two hundred and fifty million francs so that they were financially ready for the campaign.

In addition the Bulgarian Army had an advantage over the German Army that they were fighting in a territory in which they had already operated, and doing it with troops which knew the country and who were veterans with two campaigns behind them. They were further burning to avenge the defeat they had suffered at the hands of the Serbians two years before. In the period of rest they had enjoyed they had manufactured and imported enormous quantities of ammunition. For three months before the beginning of the campaign they had had the advan-

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tage of the counsel of several score officers of the German staff, who had worked out at the Ministry of War in Sofia. the whole plan of campaign of the Austro-German and Bulgarian armies.

They had further. the certainty that the instant they joined hands with. Field-Marshal von Mackensen's army they would- be able to receive munitions in unlimited quantities, while the Serbians, once they were cut off from all communication with the outside world, would be unable to renew their stock. They had therefore to husband their ammunition, while their enemies had no necessity for doing so. Of this they had bitter experience during the campaign.

One of the chief difficulties with which the Serbians had to contend was their ignorance of the strength of the army which Austria and Germany were prepared to bring against them. All they had to go on until the actual invasion were the reports brought in by the French aviators attached to the Serbian Army, and these, of course, gave only a general indication. They could only report on the troops -massed in the vicinity of the frontier, while the Serbian General Staff had to reckon with German reinforcements kept out of sight which could be brought up by rail in a. few hours.. It was this uncertainty which rendered it very difficult for Field-Marshal Putnik to make his plans to meet the Austro-



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German invasion. If he kept too many troops on the northern front he would weaken his eastern one, while if he massed his main forces against the Central Powers, he exposed Macedonia to invasion.

Of course in regard to the strength of the Bulgarian Army he knew that to a battalion. He knew that opposed to the 150,000 men, the maximum force which he could spare to hold Bulgaria in check, were 36 regiments of 4 battalions with reserve formations of equal strength, 9 artillery regiments and 4 batteries of 4 guns each, 24 mountain batteries and 6 battalions of fortress artillery, 12 regiments of cavalry, besides pioneers, railway troops, pontoon battalions, telegraph battalions and other technical units. This formidable force, one third stronger than the whole Serbian Army, was ready to hurl itself on Serbia's flank the moment she was in grips with the Northern invaders.

All that Serbia could do was to await the attack of her enemies and transport her army to the point chiefly menaced. This entailed a continual *va-et-vient* of troops, divisions being taken from one front and hurried to the point of danger on the other, as occasion arose. And this in a country where the railway is single track and the rolling stock none too plentiful. No army ever faced more crushing odds or faced them with more courage, even if it was the courage of -despair.

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Field-Marshal Putnik had also to reckon with the unfavourable geographical position of the capital and the temporary capital of the country ; Belgrade being but a few hundred yards from the Hungarian frontier, while Nish, the-- seat of government at the moment of the outbreak of hostilities, is one day's march from the Bulgarian frontier. In addition he was handicapped by the fact that the Salonica-Uskub-Nish railway, on which so much depended at Strumnitza, is but three short miles from the Bulgarian frontier and thus at the mercy of a sudden *coup de main*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BATTLE OF THE MORAVA

WHEN in August last I received orders from my paper,' the New York *Tribune*, to join the headquarters of the Serbian Army I was at Lugano in Switzerland where, safe from the pitiless blue pencil of the censor, I could record the progress of events in Alsace and in the Italian Peninsula. As it was clear from the telegrams in the Swiss press that the opening of the second Austro-Serbian campaign was imminent I left at once for Salonica via Rome, Naples and Athens.

At Rome I had a long conversation (of which I have given a summary in the introduction to this volume) with M. Coromilos, the eminent diplomatist who represents Greece at the Italian court. He was frankly pessimistic at the extraordinary course of the diplomacy of the Allied Powers and foresaw only a catastrophe as the result of it. Reports of the coming attack on Serbia by Austria, this time reinforced by Germany, were day by day more persistent, but the same curious optimism regarding the attitude of Bulgaria was visible in the columns of the Italian

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governmental organs, which probably drew their inspiration from the **Quai d'Orsay** and the Foreign Office.

In Athens I found the prevailing sentiment one of extreme pessimism. The Greek Kingdom was torn by conflicting currents. The Premier, **M. Venizelos**, was frankly in sympathy with the Allies, but he informed me that King Constantine was convinced of the ultimate triumph of Germany. When I asked him on what His Majesty based this conviction he simply smiled discreetly. and shrugged his shoulders without replying. An American *confrère* who had had a long conversation with King Constantine, to whom I put the same question, replied that it could not be described as a conviction. A conviction is arrived at as the result of logical reasoning. In the King's case it was simply faith, a sort of heaven-sent revelation. The definition of faith in the **Shorter Catechism**- as "the evidence of things not seen,. the substance of things hoped for," was probably a good description of His Majesty's mentality.

The Greek General Staff, which, almost to a man, is German trained, made no secret of their sympathies for the cause of the **Central Powers**. The members of the court, carefully chosen by King Constantine's consort, the sister of the **Kaiser**, were also strongly pro-German. The notorious Baron

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von Schenck, the agent in Athens for the German propaganda, who disposes of unlimited financial resources, had done his work thoroughly and secured the support of a large and influential section of the press. He had also enrolled in his service a number of Greek politicians susceptible of yielding to the kind of persuasion he uses. It is in this atmosphere that King Constantine lives. It is therefore no wonder that he had confidence in the power and the greatness of Germany and the ultimate triumph of her arms, for all suggestion to the contrary is carefully kept from his ears.

At the same time the great mass of the people were on the side of the Allies. But they had no means of making their opinions felt in governmental circles. King Constantine is undoubtedly extremely popular with the army and with that on his side he does not fear any attempt at revolution. He has twice forced M. Venizelos to resign, when he was at the head of a majority in the Chamber. This, of course, is straining the constitution to **breaking-point**, as it is only a disguised form of coup *d'etat*, but having, as I have said, the army on his side, he thinks that he can risk such measures.

On one point, however, M. Venizelos informed me the King could be depended on, and that was in regard to carrying out his treaty obligations towards Serbia. His Majesty had not **yet**, he declared to

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me, got to the "scrap of paper" theory of his imperial brother-in-law; and he was prepared to stand by the treaty with Serbia in case that Kingdom should be attacked by Bulgaria. Some strong influence must, however, have been brought to bear on him to make him change this view. When, a fortnight later, the moment came for Greece to maintain her engagements King Constantine dismissed M. Venizelos from power and substituted a Cabinet under M. Zaimis, which repudiated the Greco-Serbian Treaty as inapplicable to the case where King Peter's dominions were attacked by two Great Powers as well as by Bulgaria. This represented the final break-up of the Balkan League, and the Peninsula, from that moment, returned to the anarchical conflict of interests which had for a quarter of a century been its leading characteristic.

At Salonica I found intense excitement prevailing. Every report from Nish and Sofia showed that the moment of the catastrophe was approaching. It was 'extremely curious to contrast these reports with the optimistic telegrams from London and Paris assuring us that Bulgaria was the sincere friend and supporter of the Entente Powers. People in Salonica read these telegrams with the blankest amazement. The remarks made on the extraordinary policy being pursued by the Allies were far from complimentary to the Foreign Ministers carrying it out.

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On September 28th, Bulgaria flung off the mask and mobilized her army. Salonica was seething with excitement, everybody asking what would be the policy of Greece. Forty-eight hours later came the royal decree mobilizing the Greek Army in its turn. Everybody supposed that Greece was going to stand by her Serbian ally. But they reckoned without the King. The mobilization was the last act of M. Venizelos. A few days later he was dismissed from power. German influence in Athens had, again, carried the day.

These startling weeks had, as their first result, the collapse of the castle of cards so painfully erected by the Foreign Ministers of the Entente Powers. They began to fear that the astute Bulgarian Prime Minister had been making a fool of them (a conviction which everyone in the Balkans except the diplomatists of the Entente Powers had reached weeks before) and they began to concert hasty 'measures to avert, the impending disaster.

When I came down -from lunch at the Hotel de Rome on September 27th I found the vestibule crowded with British soldiers seated around, their rifles between their knees and the floor littered with their knapsacks. They were the orderlies of the Staff Officers who had just arrived from the Dardanelles on a French warship. It was clear that an expeditionary force was about to be disembarked in Salonica.

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## The Battle of the Morava

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I saw that if I wanted to make sure of reaching Nish I had no time to lose, as it was more than certain that the first move of the Bulgarians would be to attack the Salonica-Nish railway at Strumnitza. I accordingly left Salonica on Friday, October 1st, in the *train de luxe* which left three times a week for the temporary capital of Serbia. It was a thoroughly up-to-date train with sleeping and restaurant cars, but there its resemblance with similar trains in other countries ceased. It crawled along at a snail's pace, stopping at every little wayside station, and sometimes even, for no apparent reason, in the open country. The line, since the mobilization had been ordered, was closely guarded, but the presence of the Greek sentries was the only sign of military activity. But once we had crossed the Serbian frontier all this changed. The railway wound its way among a succession of low, arid, brown hills on the crests of which one could see the silhouettes of guns in battery and the parapets of freshly dug trenches.

At Strumnitza, which is only four short kilometres from the Bulgarian frontier, a strong force of infantry, cavalry and artillery was encamped. Long lines of trenches had been dug along the hills dominating the railway and strong redoubts constructed for placing guns. The railway guard consisted mostly of peasants in the russet-brown costume peculiar to Serbia.. Though the only outward sign of their



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military status was their rifle and bayonet, they had the air of veterans with their bronzed resolute faces, barred by the heavy, drooping moustache. It was a curious contrast to travel in a modern *train de luxe* through a country devastated by three years of ceaseless war.

In every siding were trains piled high with munitions, aeroplanes, automobiles) and other war material all rolling northward as fast as they were disembarked at Salonica. When the train entered Serbian territory its speed was, if possible, slower than ever. But fourteen months of newspaper work on the, French front had, however, trained me to philosophy in such matters. Trains in war time leave when they leave and arrive when they arrive, and that's all about it.

It was nearly midday of the second day when we finally arrived at our destination. . As is usual in Balkan towns the station at Nish is a mile and a half or so from the centre of the town and the route lies over cobble-stone streets in an incredible condition of disrepair. Nish, in spite of having been Serbian. for over thirty years, still has all the characteristics of a Turkish town, wide, dirty streets flanked on either side by rows of one-story houses, with, here and there, immense public squares over which the ramshackle public vehicles roll and rock like ships in a heavy sea. In fine weather the dominant feature

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is dust which drifts in heavy clouds before the wind, in wet weather the streets are a- sea of mud of a peculiarly tenacious quality.

At ordinary times Nish has a population of about 30,000 souls. When I reached it there were nearly one hundred thousand and there had been even a greater number. These were chiefly refugees who had poured into the town during the first Austrian invasion, and officials- who had followed the Government when Nish was made the temporary capital. The Foreign Office was installed in the Prefecture and the other Ministries were lodged *tant bien que mal* in other public buildings. The diplomatic corps, which had followed the Government from Belgrade, occupied such quarters as they had been able to find. The Diplomatic Club, where the members of the corps lunched and dined; was installed in rooms above the Bella Kaphana, the leading restaurant of the town. The fare of the Bella Kaphana bore only 'a distant resemblance to that of the Maison d'Or or the Café Anglais, but *à la guerre comme à la guerre*. Later on we were destined to look back on the meals there as repasts fit for Lucullus.

The Bella Kaphana was the news exchange of the town. Here at lunch and dinner one met French aviators and Red Cross surgeons, British and American ambulance units, Serbian officers of every arm, local

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journalists and government officials. The principle underlying the efforts of the *chef* seemed to be "When in doubt use paprika," a peculiarly vivacious form of red pepper. The result was that -almost every dish tasted like a torchlight procession and brought tears to the eyes of the most hardened. Wine was still plentiful and beer (two francs a bottle) could be had at irregular intervals when the train brought a consignment from Salonica.

The wildest rumours were current,- but little news that could be depend-ed upon. The newspapers from Salonica were eagerly bought up. They contained reports of the steady disembarkation of French and British troops and hope ran high that reinforcements would soon reach Serbian soil. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed and when at last the arrival of French troops was officially announced for the next day, the town went wild with excitement. The municipality voted twenty thousand francs,. -which it could ill spare, for the decoration of the streets in honour of the arrival of the Allied troops. In a few hours the town burst out in a mass of bunting, French tricolours and British Union .-Jacks were everywhere *en évidence*. Lines of Venetian. masts, festooned with. French and British colours, were erected from the railway station to the Town Hall. Peasants poured in by thousands from the surrounding country and every inhabitant of Nish was afoot

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to welcome the Allies. But hours passed and nothing came. Then it was announced that the arrival had been postponed till the following day. But again disappointment awaited the eager crowds. Day after day passed, till finally, as I was returning home one night, I saw town officials going round in the darkness gathering in the flags and packing them in carts. Next morning the bare poles gave eloquent testimony that the short dream of aid from the 'Allies was at an end.

Depression followed on the former enthusiasm. Hour by hour the reports from the Danube and the Bulgarian frontier were eagerly read. Every evening in the *Bella Kaphana* the faces of the foreign diplomatists were scanned to see if their expressions would give any indication of the way events were trending. All we could hear- was that the Austro-German forces on the Danube front were massing scores of batteries of guns of every calibre opposite Belgrade, Semendria, Ram and other towns on the river banks while hour by hour the Bulgarians were concentrating on the eastern frontier. It became known that Field-Marshal Putnik had asked permission of the Allies to march the Serbian Army across the frontier and break up the Bulgarian mobilization and that he had not only been refused the permission in question, but had been given the astounding assurance that the Bulgarian mobilization was not directed

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against Serbia. This assurance was received with derision in Nish where everybody knew the Bulgarian attack was only a matter of hours.

Then the crash came. On the 5th of October we received news of the bombardment of Belgrade. On that date forty-three guns of 30.5 and 38 centimetres supported by scores of field guns and mortars of various calibre opened fire on Belgrade, Semendria and other towns along the banks of the Save and Danube. The Serbians, who had sent their heavy guns to the Bulgarian frontier, had at the Danube only a score or two of obsolete Debangue guns and some howitzer batteries. The only heavy ordnance were the two French and four British naval guns manned by French and British sailors. These were supported by some heavily armed Russian monitors on the Danube. This international force was under the command of Admiral Troubridge of the British Navy. The French guns were struck by shells and put out of action the first day of the bombardment. The British guns were more fortunate and Commander Kerr was able to withdraw them unharmed. They accompanied the Serbian Army throughout the entire retreat -and rendered yeoman service.

The bombardment of Belgrade was one of the fiercest in the history of the present war. Over 50,000 projectiles fell in the town in the first forty-eight hours. Nothing was spared. Over eighty

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shells struck or fell around the American Hospital under the charge of Dr. Ryan, and that in spite of the fact that a Red Cross flag, visible for miles, was flying from the roof.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts the German infantry on October 6th managed to get a footing on the right bank of the Danube at Belgrade and three other points. The capital was only defended by a small body of troops, the gendarmerie and a number of Comitadjis or irregulars. The defenders fought their assailants hand to hand. The quays of the Danube were running with blood and piled with German corpses. When they were driven from the quays the Serbs continued the fight in the streets of the city.

A large number of the inhabitants tried to fly when they saw the Germans land. But the artillery on the other side of the river had opened a curtain fire on the environs of the city. Two miles away hundreds of shells were bursting, making a zone of fire impossible to cross, while overhead German aeroplanes were circling, dropping bombs on the defenceless people below.

It took two days for the invaders to break the heroic resistance of the defenders of the capital and to reach the positions to the south from which they could dominate the town. By October the 15th, however, they finally occupied the banks of the

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Save and Danube. Overwhelmed by numbers, badly protected by hastily constructed trenches, the Serbian troops fought desperately, supporting courageously. three and four attacks each day, each preceded by a formidable artillery preparation, backed up by masses of asphyxiating gas. The 'Germans bought their success dearly. Their losses in killed and wounded were enormous, and at one point alone, near Zabrezh, the Serbs took over a thousand prisoners, with nearly a 'score of officers.

Surprised at meeting such resistance, the Germans brought up fresh reserves, and soon their forces outnumbered the Serbs by nearly three to one, while their artillery was over twice as strong as that of the defending force. But in spite of this the situation remained undecided.

It was the pressure from the Bulgarian front that finally made the balance to incline in favour of the Germans. Every day brought to Nish -fresh reports of the -massing of troops on the eastern frontier, and on October 12th the armies of Generals Jekoff and Boiadjeff, without any previous declaration of war, attacked all along the line. The Bulgarian Army alone was a hundred thousand men stronger than the entire Serbian Army of 250,000 men, which had in addition to face in the north 300,000 Germans and Austrians armed to the teeth.

It was clear from this moment that the principal

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effort of the Germans was directed against the valley of the Morava. Once this was in their hands they could force their way down it to the Bulgarian frontier and join hands with their Bulgarian allies. This would also give them possession of the Belgrade-Nish-Sofia-Constantinople railway. As soon as the junction with the Bulgarians was effected they could pour troops and munitions down to Constantinople. When this was done the Franco-British enterprise in Gallipoli would become hopeless. The real defence of that force lay on the banks of the Danube. This was seen by the Allies when it was too late. General Sarrail's force was *la moutarde après le dîner*, as our French friends would say. It landed at Salonica two months too late to be of the slightest use in saving the situation.

As soon as the German plan of operations became clear, I determined to make an effort to reach the fighting line of the Serbian force on the Danube front. The Headquarters Staff was at Kraguyevatz, a town situated halfway between Nish and Belgrade,

Kraguyevatz is a town of considerable military importance, -as here the chief Serbian arsenal, constructed by the Creusot Company of France, is situated. Though the distance was only a matter of sixty miles, it proved a long and fatiguing journey, the train trundling along at about ten miles an hour, and- being continually side-tracked to allow military



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trains loaded- with troops, guns and munitions to pass.

Kraguyevatz proved to be a pleasant little town, with nicely-built houses and well-planted gardens and orchards. It is supposed to be specially favoured meteorologically, “ rare as rain in Kraguyevatz ” being a Serbian proverb. If the rain, when it does come, in any way resembles the deluge coming down when I arrived and during my whole stay, I can only regard this as a special dispensation of Providence.

The obtaining of permission to go to the front did not prove an easy matter. The reports from the Danube were not cheerful reading. The Serbian troops were being hard pressed, and at such moments generals do not care to have the providing of facilities to journalists added to their other troubles. But after a considerable expenditure of diplomacy, I at last received permission to proceed to Palanka, where I was told I would find the Division of the Shumadia which was holding the entrance of the valley of the Morava against the Germans.

But it was one thing to get permission to go to the front and another thing to get there. I was told to take train at 11 p.m. to Lapovo and there to change on to the Palanka line. I was at the station punctual to the minute, but this was more than could be said of the train. There was a constant succession of troop trains crammed with soldiers

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pouring north to reinforce the fighting line, and others' carrying wounded from the front travelling in the contrary direction. As the line is single track this entailed a heavy strain on its resources, as the sidings were congested and the staff overworked. Hour after hour we waited in the pouring rain. The streaming platforms were glistening with wet in the crude light of the arc lamps. Train after train emerged from the outer darkness, trundled slowly, axles creaking and groaning beneath the load of men and guns, through the station and were again swallowed up in the obscurity beyond. One had a momentary -glimpse of the Serbian soldiers, standing stoically in the open trucks in the pouring rain, or saw the silhouette of the guns, their muzzles pointing skyward, as they passed, the heads of the horses emerging through the openings of the cattle trucks used for their transport.

But at length, at four o'clock in the morning, our train arrived, and after a sojourn of half an hour or so in the station moved slowly in the direction of Lapovo. Here on arriving we found chaos and confusion. The Bulgarians, we heard, were approaching Nish, and orders had been given to evacuate that town. Train after train was pouring into Lapovo disgorging its quota of fugitives. The platforms were piled mountains high with trunks and baskets and littered- with ambulance stores, among

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which were moving hundreds of French aviators, Red Cross surgeons and nurses, scores of officers and civil functionaries.

The news they brought was not cheerful. The Bulgarians, it -was said, would be in Nish in twenty-four hours. This was not exactly welcome news for me, as all my baggage was still there, and all ~~my~~ **money**, with the exception of the couple of hundred dinars. I had with me, was in the custody of ~~the~~ **the** Banque France-Serbe. But experience had taught me to take such reports cum *grano salis*. As the Serbs, when I had left Nish forty-eight hours before, were still in possession of the fortress of **Pirot**, twenty kilometres from the town, I did not anticipate such a speedy arrival of the Bulgarians. In any case, I was bound for the moment in the opposite direction and would have to leave the rest to fate.

About seven o'clock the train for Palanka arrived, and we proceeded on our way.. With me were a number of staff ~~officers~~ bound for the front and three or four French military doctors. Soon the heavy boom of cannon announced that we were approaching our destination, and at midday our train rolled slowly into the station of Palanka. Outside we found **every** indication that we were very near.. the fighting line; Long lines of field guns drawn by teams of patient oxen filled the streets, a constant stream of ambulance wagons. bearing wounded was pouring into ~~the~~ **the**

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station yard to reach the sidings where the hospital trains were drawn up, while a second stream of wagons, filled with ammunition and food for the troops, was moving in the contrary direction. Crowds of fleeing peasants thronged the little town, besieging the inns and bakers' shops, clamouring for food. The staff automobiles promised had not arrived, so the French doctors and myself made for the nearest restaurant to lunch and await their arrival.

It was nearly two o'clock when they put in their appearance, and we started for the fighting line. Soon after leaving the town we came on an endless line of bullock wagons pouring toward Palanka. With them were marching scores of peasants, carts piled high with furniture and bedding covered over with the brilliantly-coloured quilts which the Serbians affect, on which were perched the old women and the children too young to stand the fatigues of the march. The men, the women and the older children were tramping alongside; leading the oxen or driving countless heads of cattle and sheep and droves of pigs. Some even drove flocks of geese and other inhabitants of the poultry yard. When we breasted a steep ascent and arrived at the summit, an extraordinary sight met our view. As far as the eye could reach, in front and behind, was an endless procession of vehicles all pouring southward. It was clear that the retreat had begun and

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that the baggage train of the division was on the move. But there was no haste or confusion, everything was being conducted with the greatest order. Only the women showed signs of nervousness, glancing back with frightened looks toward the north, from which we now heard the uninterrupted thunder of the guns; It was clear that a few miles off a furious battle was raging.

But a second line of hills hid the actual battlefield, and it was only half an hour later when we had breasted the second ascent that it came in view. Once we had attained the summit a marvellous panorama burst upon our view. At our feet was a rolling plain shut in right and left by high hills through which we could see a river wending. This was the famous valley of the Morava through which for centuries has poured the tide of invasion. Away on the horizon we could faintly distinguish the gleam of water showing the course of the Danube. In the centre of the panorama, on the Hungarian side of the Danube, was a pyramid-shaped mountain. Here, I was told, was the headquarters of Field-Marshal von Mackensen, who was directing the operations of the invading force. Right opposite, between us and the Danube, in the middle distance, was another line of low hills running transversely across the valley, This was studded here and there with clumps of trees and small woods, among which

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could be seen the roofs of several villages. Near the crests were the Serbian batteries in action against the German forces advancing from the Danube to force the entry of the valley. We could not see the guns, but the short, sharp spurts of flame from their muzzles disclosed their positions. The villages, several of which were ablaze, were being held by the Serbian infantry, while behind the clumps of trees we could see an occasional regiment of cavalry under cover.

But nothing could have withstood the tremendous fire of the German heavy guns. The enemy had managed, at the price of endless difficulties, to transport a number of their monstrous cannon to the right bank of the Danube, and these were hammering the Serbian lines. Huge shells from the thirty-eight centimetre guns were pounding the crest of the hills, which were smoking like volcanoes as these enormous projectiles burst. So tremendous was their effect that the crests were changing their shape before our eyes.

As one gun after another came into action the Serbian position became untenable. They had no artillery -with which they could make effective reply to ordnance of this calibre, and we could see the long lines of grey-coated infantry winding down the slope, using woods, ditches and the ruined villages as cover from the murderous fire of the enemy. A

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**minute** or two later a tremendous explosion shook the air, and a couple of miles away a **pillar** of black smoke mounted slowly into the sky. The Serbs had blown up the last bridge across the **Morava**. Long **lines** of German infantry began to appear on the opposite crest. A couple of Serbian battalions marched up to the line of hills from which we were viewing the German advance. They immediately set to work to throw up a line of trenches.- They were the rearguard of the Serbian force, whose task was to cover the retreat of the Serbian division. Looking backward along the road to Palanka, we could see that the endless line of **baggage** wagons had been replaced by long columns of infantry. The German guns were still thundering on the **front**, and fresh masses of infantry were arriving on the crest of the hill and preparing to pour down the slope.

Von Mackensen had forced the entry of the valley of the Morava.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FALL OF NISH AND KRAGUYEVATZ

WHEN it became clear that the Germans had forced the entrance to the valley of the Morava, I left the fighting line to return to Palanka. The chauffeur of our automobile was a stranger to the district, and lost his way while traversing a small forest. Just as we were about to emerge from this a sergeant and a couple of men,- reconnoitring on the edge of the wood, rushed into the middle of the path and made signs to us to stop. We were,, they explained, making straight for the German lines. With some difficulty we turned the automobiles on the narrow pathway and retraced our steps.

The long *détour* we were then forced to make before we gained the highway to Palanka took so much time that when we reached it we found the German artillery had been put in battery on the crest of a range of hills about three miles away. Seeing two staff automobiles, they promptly opened fire. The first shrapnel burst about two hundred and fifty yards beyond us, just over a group of soldiers.



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The second burst fifty yards or so behind us. Just as I expected that they would find the range with the third shot, we entered a cutting which concealed us from view. Here we stopped to take a soldier on board who had been somewhat badly wounded in the head by the first shrapnel, and conducted him to the nearest ambulance.

*En route* to Palanka I went to pay my respects to Colonel Terzitch, the Commander of the Division of the Shumadia at the village where he had established his headquarters. He invited me to dine with him and his Staff, but said the hour would depend on how long it took him and his Chief of Staff to draw up the plan of operations for the morrow and issue his orders. I spent the intervening time in strolling about the village (the name of which has slipped my memory), which enjoys, I was told, the proud honour of being the largest village community in Serbia. It is certainly one of the most prosperous-looking, but this is not surprising, as the valley of the Morava has the reputation of being the most fertile in the kingdom. Its inhabitants are said to be the richest peasants in the country.

The headquarters of the division were installed in the village school-house. The mess was the most democratic I ever saw. With Colonel Terzitch, his Chief of Staff and other officers, sat down the non-commissioned officers and the men acting as secre-

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## The Fall of Nish and Kraguyevatz

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taries and orderlies. All ate the same fare, the only difference being that at the officers' table wine was served. Colonel Terzitch is one of the most celebrated and capable soldiers in the Serbian Army (he is now Minister of War), and his division, recruited in the valley of the Shumadia, is as celebrated as its chief.

During the meal he communicated to me some details of the forces attacking his division. These consisted of three divisions, and were **one** division of the Third German Army Corps, commanded by General von **Lochow**, the **25th** Reserve Division, and the 46th 'Division of the Twenty-Third Army Corps. The infantry divisions of the Third Army Corps were the **6th**, under General Meyer von **Radek**, and the **25th**, under General von Jarrolski. The 6th Division was made up of the **20th**, **24th** and **64th** Regiments of Infantry and a battalion of "Jaeger" or light infantry, the **3rd**, **18th** and **39th** Regiments of Artillery and the 3rd Regiment of Cavalry. The **25th** Reserve Division was made up of the **168th** Active Regiment and the **83rd** and **113th** Reserve Regiments, the **13th** and **25th** Regiments of Artillery and the **4th** Reserve Regiment of Dragoons.

The **46th** Reserve Division, which completed the force, was composed of the **214th**, **215th** and **216th** Reserve Regiments of Infantry, two regiments of artillery and a regiment of cavalry. It had evidently

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been hastily improvised for the Serbian campaign, as the troops composing it had been brought from Ypres and Arras on the French front and Brest-Litovsk on the Russian front.

The Serbian casualties for the day, Colonel Terzitch informed me, had been just under 300 men killed. The total for the three days' fighting had been over twelve hundred. The Germans outnumbered the Serbians by two and a half to one. In spite of the crushing superiority of the enemy the Serbians fought with courage and confidence, defending their positions foot by foot.

As I was anxious to leave for Nish I took leave of Colonel Terzitch about ten o'clock and started for Palanka. Rain was coming down in torrents, and the whole countryside had become a quagmire. The automobile churned its way, up to the axles in mud, for five or six miles or so, and then came to a standstill, completely bogged. We obtained the aid of a passing oxen team, but even its efforts failed to move the car. There was nothing for it but to abandon our vehicle. A couple of hundred yards further we came across an empty motor ambulance. This was still able to move, so we got in, and slowly and with difficulty we ploughed our way to the station, taking over an hour to cover the three miles.

At Palanka there was no train and the station-master could not tell me when there would be one, as

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## The Fall of Nish and Kraguyevatz

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the military transport practically monopolized the line. Telegraphic inquiries revealed the fact that our train was side-tracked two stations away, but as to when it would reach Palanka no one could say. The rain was coming down in torrents. The only haven of refuge was the station-master's office, which a stove, heated red-hot, had brought to the temperature of a Turkish bath. As I had had no sleep for thirty-six hours I dragged a mail-bag from a corner to act as pillow, and lay down on the floor. I got up every hour or two to see what prospects we had of getting away, but each time found the same monotonous procession of military trains rolling through the station.

To pass the time I got the telegraph operator to ring up his colleagues up and down the line, and thus got the latest news and rumours, especially rumours, for there seemed to be a dearth of reliable news. Strumnitza, we heard, was in the hands of the Bulgarians, who had blown up the bridges on either side of the town, so that railway communication with Salonica was definitely cut. Nish was still in the hands of the Serbians, but was emptying fast, the inhabitants fleeing by thousands. But Pirot was still holding out, so that the immediate occupation of Nish was not likely.

As by midday there was still no sign of our train, I and a couple of French army surgeons determined to

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go to the village for lunch. Here we found everything in confusion. The inhabitants were hastily loading their belongings on carts and wagons and getting ready to flee. At the inn we managed to get some food, but had to wait till the landlord unpacked knives and spoons from the wagon in the courtyard on which his household possessions were piled. prepared for flight.. The Germans, we were told, were only about seven miles distant, and the occupation of Palanka was expected the following morning. While we were still lunching a messenger arrived from the station-master to say that the long-expected train had at last arrived, and requesting us to make haste. Five minutes later we were at last *en route* for Nish.

Though the distance is only about 60 miles, we were sixteen hours in performing the journey. The train was filled with refugees, who had fled from the Danube towns during the bombardment. In my compartment were three young girls, school teachers at Belgrade, who passed the time singing the national ballads of Serbia. The music of these is singularly beautiful, with an underlying note of sadness characteristic of all Slav melodies.

It was six o'clock in the morning when we arrived -at Nish. The station was crowded with people waiting to leave, but the greatest order prevailed. There was no sign of panic. Just outside' the station I met a Staff Colonel of my acquaintance. He told me he

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and another officer were leaving for Salonica with dispatches for General Sarrail. As the Nish-Salonica line was cut they 'were going by automobile to Monastir, and thence by rail to Salonica. He told me that Pirot had fallen, and that the Bulgarians were 'advancing on Nish. In the south they were marching on Uskub. In the north, in addition to Field-Marshal von Mackensen's army, which I had seen force the entrance to the valley of the Morava, a second German Army under General von Gallwitz was advancing on Kraguyevatz. An Austrian force assembled in Bosnia was preparing to invade Serbia from that side. The country was, therefore, being attacked from north, east and south. The 250,000 Serbians were face to face with 300,000 Germans and Austrians and 400,000 Bulgarians. All telegraphic and postal communications with the outside world, except *via* Monastir, was now cut, and even the Monastir route was threatened. When this was cut our isolation would be complete. By the irony of fate the wireless installation at Nish, the only one in Serbia capable of communicating with Salonica, had been completed and sent its first message only three days before, and already it would have to be destroyed.

The Government and the Banque Franco-Serbe had left for Kraljevo. Greece had finally betrayed her, ally and refused to fulfil her treaty obligations *vis-à-vis* Serbia. The excuse given was that the treaty

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only provided for Greece coming to the aid of Serbia if she was attacked by Bulgaria alone, but did not provide for any assistance in case that country was aided by other Powers. This, of course, was a mere quibble, invented to excuse Greek desertion. "The fiasco made in Bulgaria by the diplomacy of the Allies," the Colonel added, "had undoubtedly helped to bring about this change of view in Greece?" At this moment the automobile with the other officer arrived. The Colonel shook hands, entered it, and was off on his long journey to the Greek frontier.

My only anxiety now was to get my baggage and take the train to Kraljevo, to find the Banque Franco-Serbe and the members of the Government. I was afraid that my landlady, an ancient dame of about seventy-five years, might have joined the exodus, but to my relief I found her still at home, and my baggage intact. She greeted me in voluble Serbian, and was evidently expressing her delight at my safe return. At the post-office I found a few officials still at their posts, though they now enjoyed sinecures as far, at least, as letters were concerned. A few wires were still working for official messages, but the operators were ready to cut them and remove the instruments at a moment's notice. At the Bella Kaphana I found the former crowd had disappeared. A score or so of people were lunching in depressing silence. Anxiety was everywhere

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## The Fall of Nish and Kraguyevati

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apparent. No newspapers had been published for four days, and as the official Press Bureau had accompanied the Government, we had not even its type-written bulletins for our information.

The situation was undoubtedly growing more desperate every hour. The Headquarters Staff, I heard, was preparing to leave Kraguyevatz for Krushevatz and measures were being taken to destroy the Arsenal and all its contents. The wounded who could be moved had already been evacuated. As I had hardly had any sleep for three days, I determined to pass the night in Nish and leave the next day for Kraljevo. Some timorous souls foretold that when I awoke I would find the Bulgarians in possession of the town, but I had long ago learnt to discount such prophecies. I knew that the garrison which had evacuated **Pirot** was fighting a rearguard action in the mountains to the east, and that it would take the Bulgarians at least another forty-eight hours to reach Nish.

The next evening, accordingly; after the usual interminable wait at the railway station, I left for Kraljevo. I had to change at Stalatch and asked the guard to warn me when we got there, as the officials had long ago ceased to call out the names of stations. He promised to do so, but failed to keep his word, with the result that I passed Stalatch. I got out at Parachin, a station further 'on, where I had the



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pleasure of waiting seven hours for a train back to Stalatl.. Here I had to remain all night waiting a train to Kraljevo, which I reached about four o'clock in the afternoon.

My first visit was to the Banque Franco-Serbe, which I found established in a deserted villa, the cashier installed behind a kitchen table. As he told me he had no idea how long the bank would remain in Kraljevo or where it would go on leaving that town I drew out my total fortune, about a couple of thousand dinars, which I knew would have to last me till I reached the outer world.

The next problem was to find lodgings. The 15,000 inhabitants of Kraljevo had been reinforced by over 60,000 refugees. Every house and cafe was filled to overflowing, but finally after a long search I managed, by paying Savoy Hotel prices, to obtain a wretched room in a tenth-rate inn. The unfortunate diplomatic corps had found quarters as best it could, and lunched and dined in the public room of the Hotel de l'Europe, a third-rate hostelry where there were no cloths on the tables and where the serviettes were sadly in need of the wash-tub.

Here, to my surprise; I met a confrere in the person of M. Paul du Bochet, a young French Swiss who was correspondent of the *Petit Parisien*. He and I with M. Henry Barby of the *Journal*, of Paris, were the only foreign members of the Fourth Estate left

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in Serbia. Du Bochet had been in Cetinje when the news of the Austro-German invasion reached him, and had hurried at once from the Montenegrin capital to join the Serbian Army. He had first gone south and had reached Uskub, but only to find that it was being evacuated. He left in the last train for Prisrend and Mitrovitza, and after four days' constant travelling had reached Kraljevo. Here he learned that the Headquarters Staff had left Kraguyevatz for Krushevatz, as the former town was now seriously menaced by General von Gallwitz's army.

I told him it was my intention to proceed to Headquarters and get a permit to return to the front. We arranged to go together, and left next afternoon, arriving just in time for the evening mess of the Headquarters Staff. During the meal we heard the latest news. Kraguyevatz was seriously menaced and might fall at any moment. Automobile transport and the railways were working night and day to save what they could of the contents of the Arsenal. All that could not be saved would be destroyed. Uskub had been captured by the Bulgarians, the English Ambulance Corps under Lady Paget being taken prisoners, as she had refused to leave her wounded. Nish was now also in the hands of the Bulgarians, while von Mackensen's army was forcing its way down the valley of the Morava to effect a

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junction with them. Once this was done, the road to Constantinople. would be open and the Germans would be able to send munitions to Turkey for want of which her resistance was about to collapse. This would settle the fate of the Gallipoli expedition.

The Serbian troops of the First Army under 'the Voivode Zhivoin Mishitch, facing von Gallwitz's army, after abandoning Kraguyevatz, would retreat on Kralj evo, while the Second and Third Armies,. under the Voivode Stepanovitch and General Yurishitch-Sturm, would fall back on Krushevatz. This would bring the Serbian Army into a critical position, as it would then have its back to the range of mountains which at this point traverse Serbia from east to west, and through which there are only two passes, one running from Krushevatz to Kurshoumlia, and the other from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza via Rashka. This operation would be like pouring a hundred gallon cask through the neck of a pint bottle.

Once the Serbian armies had crossed this range of mountains they would have left Old Serbia, that is- to say, Serbia as it existed before the war with Turkey, and would be driven into the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, a territory which only four short years ago was under the rule of the Sultan. The only hope of avoiding this disaster was that the Second and Third Armies should check the further advance of

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the German Army descending the valley of the Morava. Of that, in view of the enormous superiority of the German forces, there seemed little prospect. However, as there seemed just a fighting chance that the miracle might be accomplished, du Bochet and I determined to push forward and join the Second Army.

The task of the Government was now one of colossal difficulty. One third of the kingdom was in the hands of the Germans and Austrians. Hundreds of thousands of people had left their homes and were pouring south, crowding towns and villages. The advance of the Bulgarians on the east and south was driving another section of the people toward the west and north. It was clear that almost the entire population of the country -would soon be congregated in the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar with its back to the Albanian and Montenegrin frontier.

In addition as mile after mile of the railways fell into the hands of the enemy the rolling stock was pouring down from the north and up from the east and south, congesting what still remained in Serbian hands. Every siding was full to overflowing and still the mass of trucks and passenger carriages kept accumulating. As a consequence, as the line is a single track, on which the up-trains must be side-tracked to let the down-trains pass, the congestion threatened to bring the traffic to a standstill.

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Our first difficulty was one of transport. As we could no longer count on the railway, either a horse or ox drawn vehicle was necessary. As we had now no certainty of being able to return to any town once we had left it we had to be prepared to take our baggage with us. I had reduced mine to the smallest possible quantity. Du Bochet had even less as on going to Montenegro he had left his main baggage at Kraguyevatz and it would, in a few hours, in all probability be in the hands of the Germans.

But transport was difficult to find. All the horses and carriages worth taking had long ago been requisitioned by the military authorities. We hunted high and low for two days. At length we discovered an ancient carriage in a deplorable state of repair, and a couple of horses which the army had disdained. The wheels and springs of the carriage seemed sound, however, and that was the main thing. It was more, however, than I could say for the horses. One I found was completely blind, and the other seemed badly broken-winded. As we intended always to leave the vehicle a safe distance from the fighting-line and ride the animals when actually at the front, the blind animal was useless. After some search a third animal was discovered, a weedy giraffe-like chestnut. It was an Austrian horse captured during the first campaign. It had been badly wounded

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in the chest by a shell splinter and was in no way a desirable acquisition, but it was a case of Hobson's choice. For the carriage and the two Rosinantes, with the harness and a couple of ancient riding saddles, the price was 1,100 dinars, about twice their value. But it was that or nothing, so we had to make the best of a bad job. As the horses looked half-starved we decided to give them a twenty-four hours' rest and good feeding before starting.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, November 2nd, we left Krushevatz in search of the Second Army. In the forenoon we lunched at the mess of the Headquarters Staff. We found that orders had been given for it to leave Krushevatz for Rashka in the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, half way between Kraljevo and Mitrovitza. News had been received of the fall of Kraguyevatz. The army had not been able to save an enormous mass of war material which had to be destroyed. This included ten thousand tents, thousands of uniforms, hundreds of thousands of cartridges and thousands of shells. The Serbian Government rifle and gun factory installed at a cost of several million francs had been blown up.

The Government and the Diplomatic Corps had resumed their nomadic existence, and had left Kraljevo for Mitrovitza. The position of the unfortunate foreign diplomatists was not an enviable one. They had no means either of communicating

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with their governments or receiving instructions from them. But the inexorable advance of the German and Bulgarian Armies drove them from one town to another. Each time the change was for the worse.

It was about three o'clock when we left the town. The roads, we found, were' in a frightful condition. They were, for the most part, mere cart tracks and perfect seas of mud. The carriage half the time was ploughing through two feet of tenacious clay. Twice it stuck fast up to the axles, and was only extricated with the friendly aid of a passing bullock team.

Both our horses, the giraffe-like chestnut, whose name was Julius, and his partner (which I had named Caesar); a flea-bitten grey, regarded Serbian mud and the effort it entailed' on them with profound disapproval.

Just at the point where the road from Krushevatz joins the main road running to Stalatch I came across half a dozen British soldiers belonging to the heavy battery which defended Belgrade. They were seated at the roadside preparing the inevitable pot of tea without which Tommy Atkins's happiness is not complete. They told me their battery had been *en* route for Nish and that the guns had already been entrained at Stalatch. They were covering the intervening sixty kilometres in a couple of bullock carts. They were profoundly ignorant of what was happen-

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ing in Serbia or the outside world, but- were correspondingly cheerful.

They insisted on us sharing their tea, and produced a pot of the equally inevitable marmalade, which they proudly -declared was one of the few objects which had survived the bombardment of Belgrade. I left them loading up their wagon and giving orders to their drivers in weird but apparently effective Serbian.

It was dark when we reached Chichevatz, the first stage on our journey; a collision with the parapet of a bridge broke a splinter bar of the carriage and forced us to halt for the night. The problem was to find quarters and food. • Every village behind the front was filled to overflowing with the fugitive population from the country held by the Germans. Every public edifice was crammed ; people were sleeping on straw, twenty in a room, in every available house. At the village inn the food supply resolved itself into the inevitable “ Schnitzel,” which in the present instance was a badly burnt piece. of pork.. We were, however, fortunate enough to find the local station-master at the inn, who hospitably offered us a bedroom in the railway station.

When we got there we noticed that he had already begun to pack up ready to leave. With him was’ a young official of the Ministry of Commerce, who



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had been sent to destroy the stores and rolling stock. Chichevatz was the point at which the Serbian railway stores were kept. More than a hundred wagons had been loaded with accessories, including scores of typewriters, paper and bureau materials, uniforms, etc., but it was found impossible to move them, as every siding between Stalatch and Nish was so crowded that there- was not room for a single additional car.

When everything was lost on this section it was, I was told, the 'intention of the Serbian authorities to fill the whole track from Chichevatz to Nish with rolling stock from one end to the other and blow up all the bridges, so as to render the line un-workable. The new American engines, which were only delivered in **1915**, were -placed in a long tunnel on a side line, and each end of the tunnel blown up, so as to entomb them undamaged.

The news from the front was not encouraging. The Germans were advancing slowly but surely. The great disappointment to the Serbian population had been the failure to check the advance at Bagrdan. Bagrdan is in the line of mountains to the east of Kraguyevatz, and its strength as a military position is legendary in Serbia. For fifty years the Serbian nation has regarded Bagrdan as the bulwark that would check invasion: That it failed to. check the German advance greatly depressed army and people.

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The failure of the Bagrdan defence to accomplish this is not surprising. The Germans were just as well aware of the strength of the position as the Serbians, and they took good care not to make a -frontal attack on it. They simply concentrated enough force on the position to hold the Serbian Army in check and then, making use of their superiority in numbers, they sent two columns to turn the position. This forced the Serbian Army to fall back.

One of the first results was the capture by the enemy of Kraguyevatz. Since then the Germans had steadily advanced on each bank of the Morava. Seven Serbian divisions opposing eighteen German divisions were odds that not even the bravery of King Peter's army could withstand. All night long, train after train rolled through the station loaded with military stores and packed with fleeing peasants.

Next morning the station-master roused me at 7.30 o'clock with the words : " The Germans are coming ! " From his tone one could have supposed the cavalry were at the outskirts. The real reason I soon discovered was his desire that I should evacuate my sleeping quarters, as an ox-wagon was already at the door to transport the furniture to a place of safety.

We determined to leave the carriage here and ride to the front, as a carriage in a sudden retreat -is apt to 'be cumbersome. We accordingly saddled the

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horses and rode to Parachin, twenty kilometres distant.

Parachin we found in a state of considerable excitement. The thunder of the guns drawing nearer and nearer gave evidence of the approach of the enemy. The battle was raging at Chupria, about four miles outside the town. The Second Army held the heights on both sides of the valley, opposed to a force of nearly double its strength.

The German tactics were simple but effective. They opened a tremendous and apparently indiscriminate fire on the Serbian position from guns and howitzers of every calibre. I noticed, however, that they no longer possessed the tremendous pieces I had seen in action at Palanka ; the 15-centimetre gun seemed the heaviest artillery they carried with them. Shells fell by hundreds on every square mile of the Serbian positions. After two hours or so of this indiscriminate bombardment we began to see parties of infantry, from twenty to fifty strong, pushing forward. When they came within rifle-range they began to deploy and opened fire on the Serbian positions. As soon as the Serbian infantry began to reply, a field telephone, with which each of the German advance parties was armed, 'phoned back the exact position of the trenches to the artillery in the rear. An instant later an avalanche of shrapnel and shell was poured on the Serbian lines, while at

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the same time the heavier German guns opened a "tir de barrage" on the ground two miles in the Serbian rear to hinder the movement of retreat or prevent reinforcements being brought up.

The Serbian infantry complained that except these advance parties, which retired as soon as they had made the Serbians reveal their position, they hardly ever saw a German infantry soldier, and had to retreat before a storm of shell and shrapnel. It was clear that the capture of Chupria was only a matter of hours, so we decided to ride back to Parachin.

As the Staff of the Second Army was expected to arrive in that town that evening we determined to remain there over night. With thirty thousand refugees in a town of twelve thousand inhabitants it was no easy matter to find a room, 'but the Mayor kindly had a deserted house broken open for us, and also, which was even more important, found food and stabling for our horses. Next morning the people of the next-door house awakened us with the news that the Germans were attacking the town and that infantry fire was clearly audible.

When we got out we found this was an exaggeration but that the Serbian baggage train was pouring through the town-a clear sign that the retreat had begun. The town was in wild excitement for two reasons-firstly, on account of the approach of the

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Germans, and secondly, because orders had been given to distribute to the inhabitants everything in the military stores to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. As a result I saw hundreds of people going about carrying dozens of pairs of boots, uniforms, underclothing, bread, biscuits, etc.

At midday, the provision and munition columns having safely cleared the town, General Stepanovitch and his staff, after placing a strong rearguard to delay the German advance as long as possible, left for Razhan, a town about twenty miles distant, from which a road led to the entrance to the mountain pass leading from Krushevatz to Kurshoumlia.

## CHAPTER V

### FROM CHICHEVATZ TO KRUSHEVATZ

THE return journey to Chichevatz was uneventful, save for the discovery that Caesar, my mount, in addition to being broken-winded, seemed to suffer from some sort of heart trouble, which induced him to lie down at the most unexpected moments. I never discovered how far those attacks coincided with a mere desire for repose. I noted that a sharp application of my riding whip contributed remarkably to his speedy-recovery, and that the attacks generally came on when there was a particularly nasty bit of road to negotiate.

Our progress was slow, as the road, as far as the eye could see, was blocked by moving columns, infantry, cavalry, . artillery, baggage wagons and pontoon trains' pouring like a flood towards the mountains. The Second and Third Armies were now in full retreat and making every effort to gain the entrance to the pass as speedily as possible. The word speed, in connection with 'the Serbian Army, has, of course, only a relative value, as it can never exceed the pace set by the ox-wagons. Speed in

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the case of Serbian troops has therefore been replaced by prolongation of the effort, so as to cover the greatest possible distance in the twenty-four hours. The more I saw of the Serbian oxen, the more my admiration for them increased. They seemed tireless and their powers of traction were perfectly marvellous. The wagons, too, I found, in spite of their apparently primitive construction, were marvels of strength and efficiency, standing an amount of wear and tear that would have wrecked any ordinary vehicle.

The problem that faced Field-Marshal Stepanovitch and General Yurishitch-Sturm was no easy one. It was to transport the hundred and thirty thousand men of the Second and Third Armies, with thirty thousand bullock wagons, a hundred batteries of artillery, three divisions of cavalry, pontoon trains, field telegraph and telephone sections, munition columns, and the thousand and one things that form the impedimenta of a modern army, through a 'mountain defile seventy kilometres in length.

The entrance to this pass lies just outside Krushevatz, and it runs via Jankova Klissura to Kurshoumlia, a few miles from the old frontier of the Turkish Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, annexed by Serbia after the defeat of the Sultan's armies in **1912**.

On account of the encumbered state of the roads our progress was slow. Usually when mounted we

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could push on past the slow-moving military columns, but in the present instance this was impossible, as a flood of peasants and their families, fleeing from Chupria, Parachin and a score of other , villages, filled the road on either side of the marching troops.

Darkness had fallen when we reached Chichevatz. At the railway station we found the station house dismantled. All the furniture was gone and the station-master's aged mother was cooking the evening meal in an outhouse in which a deal table and a few chairs had been placed to serve as a temporary dining-room. A section of engineers had arrived to blow up the bridge and fire the railway wagons filling the sidings before the arrival of the Germans. Telegraphic and telephonic communication still existed on the north to Chupria and on the south to Stalatch. We were thus able to follow the progress of the Germans hour by hour. During the dinner every now and then the telephone bell in the station would ring. The station-master picked up his cap and went out to answer it.

,The first messages were from Chupria, twenty-five kilometres up the line. "The Germans are three miles from the town," came the first communication. Then a few minutes later : "Shells are falling all round the station. We are getting ready to leave." . Then after an interval of half an hour : "This is our last message. The telegraph instruments have been un-



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screwed and loaded on the train with all the personnel. We leave in a few minutes.”

After that Chupria was silent and Parachin (sixteen kilometres away) took up the tale. “The sound of the guns is growing louder every minute,” it telephoned, “Chupria is in the hands of the enemy.” Half an hour later : “Our outposts ‘and the ‘Comitadjis ’” (irregular Serbian troops who on account of their knowledge of the country generally remain in contact with the enemy till the last) “are engaged with the German advance guard.” Then, in thirty minutes or so, came the welcome news : “The Germans seem to have halted for the night. The gun fire has almost ceased. We can see the enemy’s bivouac fires all along the horizon.”

It was a curious feeling thus to get news hour by hour of the advance of the invaders. It was like a night watch by the bedside of someone dying. Bit by bit we saw the last fatal moment approaching. When the train with the railway personnel- arrived from Chupria we got a few more details. Field-Marshal von Mackensen had halted his army, which had been engaged from dawn, just outside Parachin, which would be occupied the next morning. The train took a few refugees from Chichevatz on board and then trundled off slowly to Stalatch, the junction ten kilometres or so down the line.

The majority of the inhabitants of Chichevatz, we

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learned, had resolved not to fly but to await the arrival of the Germans. In this they showed their good sense, as they would have gained little by flight. The congestion caused everywhere by the exodus of the population threatened to bring about a national catastrophe. As the country still in the hands of the Serbians diminished, the mass of people who had fled from the districts invaded by the Bulgarians in the south and east and by the Germans and Austrians in the north was daily being herded closer and closer together. Food was getting scarce and lodgings impossible to find. And this on the threshold of winter. Up to now the sheep, oxen, pigs and flour that the fleeing population had been able to take with them had kept them alive, but these provisions were rapidly disappearing, and then starvation would stare them in the face. It was out of the question that the narrow strip of territory into which they were being slowly but surely forced could provide food for hundreds of thousands of starving people.

The first care of the Government was to provide for the needs of the army on which depended the last hopes of national salvation. Rations had to be found for nearly 200,000 men and 40,000 "Komordjis" (bullock-wagon drivers), and forage for 80,000 oxen and 20,000 horses. To increase the difficulties of the Government, the army and

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people were being forced into a country which had been Serbian for but three short years, and of which the administration was still in its initial stages. The loyalty of the Turkish and Albanian section of the population could not be altogether depended upon. It was more than certain that the Turkish section (fortunately a small minority) would regard the Germans, being allies of the Sultan, as their deliverers. It was under such circumstances that the great retreat into the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar and the newly-conquered Albanian territories was begun. It must be admitted that the prospect was far from brilliant.

Of the Allies in Salonica we heard little or nothing. An attempt by the French to advance in the direction of Uskub had, we learned, been repulsed by the Bulgarians. The Monastir-Salonica railway was still running, but it was seriously threatened and might be cut at any moment. Of the movements of the British troops in Salonica we heard nothing.

All this did not make for cheerfulness and the dinner was a depressing affair. As it was certain that the Germans could not arrive in Chichevatz till the following evening, I determined, about midnight, to go to bed. This is a *façon de parler*, as sleeping accommodation there was none, except on the bare boards of the rooms of the station house.

At this instant the telephone bell rang once more.

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It was a call from Stalatch stating that a railway inspector was coming up on an engine to see the station-master. As Stalatch was only a quarter of an hour distant I waited till he arrived. The instructions he brought were that as soon as the train with the *personnel* from Parachin passed, the bridge outside Chichevatz station was to be blown up and the telegraph and telephone instruments were to be unscrewed. The loaded trucks on the sidings were to be given over to the plunder of the civil population and then everything that remained destroyed by fire and explosion. After that the station staff was to get on a train and leave for Krushevatz. All the railway officials and the civil functionaries were ordered to make for the town of Pristina, about a hundred and twenty miles distant.

About half-past twelve I went up to a room on the first floor of the station 'house and made up a bed as well as I could out of a mass of old newspapers. I was not destined, however, to get much sleep. About half-past three I was awakened by a shock like an earthquake. The whole building rocked, and every window 'fell in with a crash. A section of engineers had just blown up the bridge a hundred and fifty yards away. This was followed by a series of minor explosions, while the red glare of a conflagration filled the room. The blowing up and burning of the hundreds of wagons had begun. An

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engine a couple of yards from my now glassless windows kept whistling unceasingly for half an hour, so that all hope of further sleep was at an end.

I got downstairs in the cheerless dawn of a drizzling morning to find the inhabitants of the village having the time of their lives. Three hundred loaded trucks and vans had been given over to plunder. Some of them contained thousands of boots, two were filled with several million packets of cigarette papers, others contained biscuits, tinned meat and vegetables, tea, coffee, uniforms and stores of all kinds. One wagon filled with perfumery was very popular with the female section of the population, peasant women who probably had never owned a bottle of scent in their lives.

After watching this orgy of looting for some time; I went off to assist the station-master's mother in preparing the morning coffee. I also ransacked our provision chest and gave *madame le chef de gare* some tins of preserved food for use on their long tramp to Pristina, as some slight return for the kindly hospitality she and her husband had shown us. While we were breakfasting we had the visit of a German aeroplane. I expected it would drop a bomb or two on the station and was somewhat nervous for our carriage and horses, but it turned out to be merely scouting, and went off without any hostile action.

After breakfast we received some unwelcome

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intelligence. During the night German. cavalry sent to maintain the Liaison between General von Gallwitz's Army, operating against the First Serbian Army at Kraljevo, twenty-eight miles to the west, and Field-Marshal von Mackensen's force had arrived at Varvarin, a village only two miles distant. As all that separated us from Varvarin was open pasture land, we might receive the visit of a patrol at any moment. We therefore decided that we would leave at once. But our coachman could nowhere be found. With the rest of the village he had gone off plundering. It was an hour before he turned up, loaded with boots, tinned provisions, hundreds of packets of cigarette papers, tins of petroleum and bottles of perfume. Meanwhile du Bochet and I had been on tenterhooks, never taking our glasses off Varvarin for a single instant, and expecting every minute to see the lances of the German cavalry en *route* for Chichevatz.

As soon as our man appeared we lost no time in harnessing the horses and getting the carriage under way. In order to lighten the task of our wretched Rosinantes we decided to cover the twenty kilometres separating us from Krushevatz on foot. The drizzling rain had now been succeeded by brilliant sunshine, so that the promenade was an agreeable one. We did not hurry, so that it was four o'clock before we arrived at Krushevatz.

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There we noticed an unaccustomed animation. The whole town, men, women and children, was afoot and everybody seemed in the best of spirits. People were standing around in groups, with--flushed faces, eagerly discussing. We soon found the explanation of the mystery. As in Chichevatz, the wagons in the railway siding had been given over to plunder. Among their contents was a consignment of twenty thousand bottles of champagne. These the villagers had promptly absorbed, with the result that the whole population was in a highly exhilarated condition. At one moment there were even some exciting scenes. Among the loot were hundreds of rifles and thousands of cartridges, and those who were lucky enough to obtain these began firing them off in all directions in sheer lightness of heart, due to their indulgence in the produce of Rheims and Epernay. It is a miracle that there were no casualties.

In the main street we met a number of nurses of the Scottish Women's Red Cross Unit. They informed us that Dr. Elsie Inglis, the head of the Unit, had decided to remain with the wounded and had called for fifteen volunteers from the forty-five nurses composing the Unit. They were somewhat nervous as to how the Germans might behave on entering Krushevatz. I was in a position to inform them that, as far as I had been able to learn, the Kaiser's troops had been on their good behaviour in

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Serbia, and had treated the Serbian wounded fairly well. This was probably policy on their- part, as they were anxious to conciliate the population and thus facilitate the occupation of the country.

I had even heard reports that they had bound up the wounds of slightly injured Serbian soldiers and sent them back to their own lines in order to spread the news of how humane they were. They further sold salt to the peasants for a few centimes the pound (the sale of salt in Serbia is a Government monopoly and brings in a large revenue, which makes it an expensive commodity), and provided sugar, at one fifth- of the ordinary price. All- this, of course, was intended, so to speak, as a bribe to the population and to make them think that the Germans were not as black as their reputation.

I have since met Dr. Elsie Inglis in London, after her release by the Germans, and found that she had had no reason to regret standing by her wounded. Though the Germans handled her and her nurses with a certain amount of unnecessary *brusquerie* and harshness, they -were not actually ill-treated, and had the satisfaction of knowing that their devotion to duty had not been in vain.

The initial good treatment of the Serbian population by their conquerors. disappeared when they thought the necessity for it had passed away. Once they were thoroughly masters of the Balkan Peninsula



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they made a "clean sweep" of everything. Sheep, pigs, cattle, grain, metals, firewood, etc., everything, in a word, which could be the slightest use to the German population, was sent off to the Fatherland and the Serbian population left to starve.

But this is a digression. *Revenons à nos moutons.* As it was certain that twenty-four hours was the longest period we could hope to remain safely -in **Krushevatz**, we set about preparations for our further journey. As it had become clear that the pulling of 'our carriage in difficult ground was beyond the strength of our two horses, we decided to add a third. We therefore purchased the blind animal we had originally rejected. He was the strongest of the three, and when placed between the two others. his want of vision was to a great extent neutralized.

When I went for a walk in the town next morning I found it a great contrast to what it had been the week before. The crowds of refugees which had filled it to excess were gone, again fleeing before the invader. With them had gone a goodly proportion of the regular inhabitants. Half the shops and all the hotels were closed and the streets were almost deserted. Such animation as there was came from the military element. An endless stream of troops and wagons was pouring through the town and making for the blue line of mountains behind which lay the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar.

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## From Chichevatz to Krushevatz

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An officer I met told me some touching stories of King Peter. The aged monarch; in spite of his failing health, deemed it his duty to pass his days in the midst of his faithful troops. He was always to be found at the point of danger and inspired his soldiers by the calm courage he showed on the field of battle. He had accompanied the Second and Third Armies nearly to Chupria and had been almost constantly under shell-fire. He travelled up to the fighting-line in his automobile, but once he had reached it he mounted on horseback to enter the fire zone. He was everywhere received with boundless enthusiasm. The Karageorgevitchs have always been a fighting race, and King Peter is true to the blood of his ancestors.

The same officer, who belonged to the Headquarters Staff, gave me a technical *résumé* of the operations of the Serbian Armies, the First opposing General von Gallwitz in the neighbourhood of Kraguyevatz, and the Second and Third trying to bar the route of the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen in its descent through the valley of the Morava.

The splitting of the German army of invasion into two was due to the obstinacy of the Serbian defence in the valley of the Morava. Field-Marshal von Mackensen saw that he could not break the Serbian resistance by a frontal attack on their positions. He therefore brought up two new divisions to reinforce

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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the troops under the command of his lieutenant, General von Gallwitz, and sent this force to threaten the Serbian left flank.

This forced Field-Marshal. Putnik to send to the threatened point troops taken from the force holding the valley of the Morava, and from the force opposing on the east the advance of the Bulgarians. The equilibrium was henceforth broken. The Bulgarian division attacking the line Zaetchar-Parachin recovered its liberty of movement, finding no one to oppose it, and was sent to reinforce the army which had occupied the line Kniazhevatz-Saint Nicholas (lost to the Serbians by the fault of the Allies) and whose mission it was to capture Nish. With the reinforcements from the Zaetchar-Parachin line the Bulgarians marching on Nish were in a superiority of three to one.

The apex of the angle formed by the junction of the two fronts was mined, and the Serbs to re-establish their position had to give ground along the whole front. This operation constituted a very delicate problem on account of the extreme length of the front, the difficulty of maintaining the *liaison* of troops so scattered, the insufficiency of the means of communication, and especially the constant menace that the two flanks might be turned by an enemy so superior in number.

The intervention of the two fresh German divisions

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## From Chichevatz to Krushevatz

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sufficed to precipitate the march of events. This resumed the whole tactics of Field-Marshal von Mackensen. He allowed the Serbians to organize their defensive, then after taking his time to thoroughly reconnoitre their positions, he brought up his reserves and, directing a crushing attack on a selected point, forced the whole army to fall back to a new alignment in order to prevent being cut in two.

There is nothing new about such tactics, but Field-Marshal von Mackensen applied them with marvellous decision and *à propos*, calculating everything, foreseeing everything and leaving nothing to chance. His immense numerical superiority and especially his superiority in guns of heavy calibre enabled him to strike with sledge-hammer force on the thin, long-drawn-out line of battle, which to defeat the constant menace of a flanking movement the Serbs were forced to maintain. The German Army, in a word, blasted its way from the Danube to the line Krushevatz-Kraljevo by means of shell and shrapnel. Its masses of infantry and cavalry were always a menace, but rarely engaged.

And now they had brought the Serbian Army with its back to the mountains and with no choice but to retreat, -the First Army through the pass from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza via Rashka, and the Second and Third Armies through the 70-kilometre long mountain gorge running from Krushevatz to Kurshoumlia.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RETREAT THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS

AS the day passed it was clear that the nervousness of the inhabitants was increasing. Though those who remained had voluntarily made up their minds to await the arrival of the Germans, it was evident that as that moment approached, they were becoming anxious as to what their treatment might be at the hands of the enemy. Shortly after midday the public crier went round summoning the oldest male inhabitants to the Town Hall. Everybody knew what this meant. These old men were to form the deputation which would proceed, bearing a white flag, along the high road toward Stalatz to announce to the Germans the surrender of the town. The downcast looks of the people in the streets showed how deeply they felt their position and what an effort it cost them to allow the enemy within-their gates.

About three o'clock I heard that isolated patrols of cavalry preceding the German advance-guard had been seen between Krushevatz and Stalatch. It was clear that our departure could no longer be delayed. I paid a last visit to the hospital to take

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## The Retreat through the Mountains

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farewell of the brave women of the Scottish Red Cross who were stopping with their wounded. I gave them all I could spare in the way of preserves, as I had heard they had been reduced to dry bread for a fortnight past, and I knew that the resources of Krushevatz were completely exhausted. They told me Mr. Smith, the secretary of the Unit, and thirty of the nurses had left that morning in two bullock carts t-making for Cetinje, the capital of Montenegro, via Mitrovitza, Ipek and Andreyevitza.

At five o'clock I had the horses harnessed and we left the town. We did not, however, make rapid progress, as a couple of miles further on we reached the road along which the army was marching. The passage of thousands of wagons and hundreds of guns had given the *coup de grâce* to the wretched road, at no time in the best of repair. It had been churned by innumerable wheels and- hoofs into a veritable quagmire. Every instant a wagon would stick fast and block the line for a mile. Our three horses, panting and covered with sweat, were straining at the traces and every now and then came to a complete standstill. To lighten their task, du Bochet and I got out and walked alongside.

As -darkness fell the scene became a sinister one. To the left behind the railway station, one building after another burst into flame ; the employ& were firing the storehouses and blowing up the wagons

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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on the siding. A few minutes later the whole town was shaken by a series of explosions. The stocks accumulated in the Obilitchevo powder magazine were being blown up.

From the eminence on which I stood the spectacle was terrifying. Krushevatz was blazing at half a dozen points, the whole sky was covered with a crimson glare, while below us the river, blood-red in the flames, could be followed to the horizon, where the flashes of Serbian guns delaying the German advance could be seen.

On the line of retreat confusion became worse confounded. The whole road was filled with a triple line of bullock wagons, their panting teams straining to tear them through the tenacious mud. Suddenly there came an explosion like an earthquake. An immense column of yellow flame shot heavenward, lighting up the whole country for miles round. The heavy girder bridge over the river had been dynamited. At the same instant three immense German shells came screaming overhead and burst with tremendous explosions, one near the Town Hall and two near the railway station. These nerve-shaking explosions caused a wild panic among the oxen, the first I had seen in Serbia. The terrified animals broke into a lumbering gallop and poured in a surging mass, with our carriage in their midst, down the road. Suddenly they came on a narrow bridge spanning a small ravine.

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## The Retreat through the Mount&ins

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Those on the outside were forced against the parapet. I saw the carriage balance for an instant and then, with the three horses, crash into the ditch twenty feet below. There was a sound of smashing glass, and it was all over with our vehicle.

The only thing was to extricate the kicking horses and save such baggage as had escaped the disaster. This was a long and difficult process as it was as dark as pitch and rain was now falling in torrents, but after an hour and a half of hard work we finally got our belongings ranged alongside the roadside. Fortunately the ravine into which our carriage had fallen was overgrown with thick brushwood. This had broken the fall of our horses so that, apart from some slight damage they had done to each other with their hoofs, they were not much the worse. We replaced the harness by the\* saddles and bridles as the easiest way of transporting them and got the animals safely back on the road.

Our next difficulty was to find means of transport for our baggage. Our coachman stopped a mounted non-commissioned officer of the transport service. I do not know exactly what he said to him, but I imagine he made him believe we were foreigners of distinction, persons of great importance whom it was advisable to befriend. In any case, he consented to 'stop the next transport wagon that should have room for our baggage.



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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A few minutes later the Reserve Munition Column of the Timok Division (which was fighting a rear-guard action to cover the retreat) came up and room was 'found for our belongings. Du Bochet and I entered a second wagon after tethering Julius and Caesar to it. Our coachman remained mounted on the third horse. This was the last we ever saw of him. He took advantage of the darkness to go off with the horse and saddle. Unfortunately for him, in the darkness he had taken the blind animal. Two days later we heard that he had been seen trying to sell it for 150 dinars (about £5), but I do not know if he found a purchaser.

Krushevat, I learned from a cavalry scout riding by, was on the point of being occupied by the Germans. All the Serbian troops had been withdrawn except a few bands of Comitadjis, or Serbian irregulars, who were still holding the bank of the river. The three shells we had seen explode were the only ones fired by the Germans, and were evidently intended more to strike terror than to do actual harm.

Worse news was brought 'from Stalatch, the last station before Krushevat. The evening before a railway train of seventy wagons had been put together and sent off. On reaching a gradient the single engine proved too weak to mount it with such a train behind it. There was nothing for it but to uncouple half the wagons and leave them

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## The Retreat through the Mountains

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behind. Unfortunately no one sent word of this to Stalatch. The result was that when the last train left that station with the employés and the military guard on board in the darkness it crashed into the standing wagons and wrecked the whole train. Forty people were killed and nearly a hundred seriously injured.

This news was not encouraging, but we could at least congratulate ourselves that we had been able to find transport for ourselves and baggage. The wagon we occupied was far from being an ideal means of locomotion. Its tilt was not exactly water-tight, and ammunition boxes, when they are thrown anyhow into a wagon, do not form a model sleeping couch. But we consoled ourselves by remembering that it was assuredly superior to any accommodation we would have had as German prisoners, which might easily have been our fate. We journeyed slowly onwards till about midnight, when the park was formed and a halt was made for the night,

At dawn we were again *en route*. As the rain had ceased we were able to get out and walk. The panorama which met our eyes was grandiose in the extreme; To right and left of us snow-capped mountains towered to the clouds. Through the centre of the valley they formed wound a narrow road skirting a rushing stream, the Rasina. As far as the eye could reach, both in front and rear, was

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## . Through the Serbian Campaign

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an endless line of marching regiments, infantry, cavalry and artillery, and thousand upon thousand of white or yellow tilted bullock wagons. For fifty kilometres in front of us and ten behind us rolled this human flood, 130,000 men, 20,000 horses and 80,000 oxen, with here and there a pontoon train, a field telegraph section or a battery of immense howitzers drawn by teams of twenty-four oxen.

But behind us we could always hear the inexorable thunder of the German guns. At first I wondered that the army did not make a stand, as if ever there was a position which seemed capable of defence it was the valley of the Rasina. About four o'clock in the afternoon we reached a point which seemed a veritable Thermopylæ. This was the point where the Topli tza flows into the Rasina. Towering mountains rose on either hand, while in the centre, facing up the valley, was an isolated hill, to left and right of which were flowing the two streams. It was the most unique position of natural strength that I had ever seen.

But I soon found the explanation of why we were pressing on without losing an instant. Field-Marshal von Mackensen had sent orders to the Bulgarian force at Nish to advance on Kurshoumlia, *via* Prokuplje, and close the exit to the pass. If this manœuvre had been successful the whole of the Second and Third Armies would have been

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## The Retreat through the Mountains

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caught in the mountain gorge with the entrance held by the Germans and the exit closed by the Bulgarians. All that the Serbians had to hold back the whole Bulgarian Army advancing on Kurshoumlia from Nish was a division and a half. If this force should fail to check the Bulgarians our fate was sealed.

It was therefore no matter for surprise that the Serbians strained every nerve to get clear of the pass, or that they were unable to halt for a single hour to hold back the pursuing Germans. Such rearguard actions as were fought were only such as were absolutely necessary to protect the march of the retreating column.

As the Serbian oxen cannot be driven much beyond their ordinary pace, on such occasions increased speed must be replaced by prolongation of the effort. On the second day of our march through the pass we were on the move, without even stopping to feed or water the oxen, from six o'clock one morning till two o'clock the next, or an *étape* of twenty-one hours. Then, after a stop of only four hours to feed and rest the exhausted animals, the march was resumed. From time to time a German aeroplane hovered over the column, but, curiously enough, made no attempt to throw bombs, though the slow-moving column offered an excellent target.

The next day we had to separate ourselves from our wagons, as a fresh arrival of ammunition filled them

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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and left no room for our baggage or ourselves. As we had now conquered a position as sort of "honorary Komordjis" of the Timok division, the major in command of the convoy found us another wagon. This was in the Provision Column of the division and was fortunately nearly empty, so that we were able to stow our baggage and ourselves in comparative comfort. The wagon was well and solidly built, with a fine brand-new yellow canvas tilt. This was made from an English tent which the driver had obtained just before the destruction of the contents of Kraguyevatz arsenal.

The driver, a man named Stanco, was destined to accompany us right to the end of our Odyssey. He was a peasant from the Timok province, and the wagon and oxen under his charge were the property of his sister-in-law, the widow of his brother who had fallen a victim to the great typhus epidemic some months before. For three long years Stanco had tramped -alongside his team. He had been at the siege of Adrianople in the war against Turkey, had gone through the campaign against Bulgaria, and been present at the rout of the Austrian Army under Field-Marshal von Potiorek.

Strange to say, Stanco could speak a little French, having been employed in a copper mine in his native province run by a French' company. Like most "Komordji," he was a past-master of camp cookery

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## The Retreat through the Mount&ins

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and could turn out a savoury meal with the most primitive materials. He was also, like many men from Timok, an excellent performer on a curious native flute, made out of a stem of the maize plant. I used often to hear him in the middle of the night playing the strangely sad and plaintive folk-songs of his people. He seemed to find consolation in this for his separation from his wife and three little children, who were trying to run his small home-stead in Timok. Our chief difficulty now was to find bread. Flour was running short and the price of the loaf had gone up from twopence to two francs. Other provisions were still, however, relatively cheap, as a fowl for instance could still be had for seventy-five centimes, or at most a dinar or franc.

The gorge through which we passed the last day of our march was one of savage grandeur and had a singular resemblance to a mountain gorge in the Scottish highlands, bare, brown-coloured mountains, topped with snow and covered half-way up with stunted trees, towering on either hand. But we had little inclination to admire scenery. Since midday we began to hear sounds of heavy firing in front of us, which showed that the Bulgarian Army was forcing its way toward Kurshoumlia, and might even yet close the exit of the pass.

Even the oxen seemed to be affected by the prevailing anxiety, and stepped out with more than

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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their usual vigour. The men of our column rarely spoke. They seemed depressed and exhausted with their long march, and hardly even raised their heads to watch the German aeroplanes which from time to time circled overhead. They were for the most part men from Timok, with the dark, swarthy complexion, brilliant eyes, and heavy sheepskin caps like inverted beehives on their heads.

They had tramped alongside their oxen from the Hungarian frontier to the gates of Constantinople, from the plains of Thrace to the mountains of Albania. They had become indifferent to everything, living as in a painful dream, having in their hearts neither hope nor hatred, but only a sort of indescribable regret, mixed at times with a childish astonishment, at the accumulated horrors of the war. We had met them by the hazard of our route, we would soon leave them never to see them again, and yet I had the conviction that if need be they would have fought for us and died for us, just because we showed them kindness. Their lives day after day were of unchanging monotony. While daylight lasted, they tramped stolidly alongside their teams. At night we stopped wherever opportunity offered. The major in command gave an order, and immediately men and beasts formed the "park." This was done automatically, always with the same gestures. In ten minutes, or half an hour at the

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## The Retreat through the Mountains

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most, the wagons had. lined up, the oxen were picketed. In the narrow space between the lines of wagons the fires were lighted.

Squatting down on their heels, the men stretched their numbed hands to the flickering blaze. Sometimes one would hear the plaintive strains from the violin of a gipsy soldier, or the low sounds of the native flute. The men seemed in these sombre days to sleep but little. After tramping all day alongside their wagons they would remain seated around the bivouac fires, dozing or talking in low tones, till the advent of the cheerless dawn warned them to feed the oxen and prepare to resume their weary march. Nothing seemed to interest them, nothing to excite them. They seemed deaf. to the ceaseless thunder of the -guns in our rear and front, though they must have realized that if the Bulgarians should drive back the weak Serbian force holding them in. check, they would fall captive to a pitiless enemy. I do not believe that they were really indifferent to the prospect, but with their curious fatalism they were prepared to accept the inevitable. This, however, did not for a moment make them relax their constant effort to push forward without losing a \*moment.

It was with relief that we saw the mountain gorge gradually broadening, a sign that we were approaching Kurshoumlia. About four o'clock in the after-



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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noon tie at last came in sight of that village, a small group of -houses, the centre of an amphitheatre of hills. But if it was insignificant as regards size and economic importance, its strategic importance was immense. To the rear ran the route to Krushevatz, along which the Germans were marching in our pursuit. To the left was the route to Nish, *via* Prokoplje, by which the Bulgarians had been advancing in their attempt to reach Kurshoumlia and close the exit of the pass, 'while on the right was a road leading to the route from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza, the route along which the First Army was passing, pursued by the Austro-German forces under General von Gallwitz. The road running from Kurshoumlia joined this route at Rashka, where, a week before, the General Headquarters had been installed on leaving Krushevatz.

The panorama presented by Kurshoumlia and the environs was a marvellous one. On all the hills were countless wagons and the bivouacs of the troops. Guns were parked in long lines and thousands of horses were either picketed or turned loose to crop the short herbage. From the further extremity, on the road leading to Pristina, our only line of retreat, long lines of wagons were moving off, their places being immediately occupied by the column debouching from the pass.

The news we received at Kurshoumlia was not

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## The Retreat through the Mountains

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cheerful. The First Army, which was retreating from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza, was being hard pressed by the Germans. The latter were reported to have reached Rashka. If this was so, our position was critical in the extreme. As soon as the last Serbian regiment had left the pass and reached Kurshoumlia, we might expect to see the first German column debouch from it. The Bulgarians who had marched from Nish to attack us were still being held at Prokuplje, ten miles distant. But the most serious news was that of the German advance to Rashka, because if they should reach Mitrovitza and march on Pristina our retreat would be completely cut off, and in a week's time we would be the centre of a circle of German and Bulgarian bayonets.

It was for this reason that the whole army was continuing its retreat on Pristina, to join hands with the First Army which was retreating from Kraljevo through Rashka' and Mitrovitza. If the movement should succeed the whole of the Serbian Army, or rather, what was left of it, would be concentrated at Pristina, in the triangle of which that town would be the apex, and the base a line drawn from Mitrovitza to Prisrend. As the population of this territory is nine-tenths Albanian and were only conquered by the Serbs less than four years ago, too much confidence could not be placed on their loyalty to King Peter. The position of the

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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Serbian Army was therefore becoming more and more desperate every hour. Desertions were becoming daily more numerous. We shot three deserters in the camp the evening after our arrival ; but I could see from the sullen attitude of the men that the carrying out of the sentence was straining things to breaking strain.

In Serbia, as I have already stated, conscription is regional ; the men in a battalion all come from the same district and those in the companies generally from the same village. They are many of. them blood relations, being brothers, cousins, uncles and nephews, etc. When once the work of demoralization begins, it is difficult to inflict drastic punishment. The three men we shot were deserters from other regiments, and the men of the Timok division regarded their fate with more indifference than they would have shown had they been from their part of the country. That the fighting in the pass had been severe in the last twenty-four hours was shown by the fact that ten wagons came in filled with -harness of the horses killed in the recent engagements. General Yurishitch-Sturm did not dare to oppose the Germans as long as the mass of his army was in the pass, but once the -main body and the transport train was through in safety, he put up a better rearguard fight. A battery of howitzers and two. batteries of field artillery which came in the

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## The Retreat through the Mountains

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night of our arrival bore signs of the heavy fighting they had been engaged in during the preceding forty-eight hours.

A ceaseless stream of troops and transport was pouring toward Pristina. They only remained bivouacked in Kurshoumlia long enough to give the exhausted men and animals the much needed rest before embarking on the 75-kilometres march to **Pristina**. As we lay on the grass on the side of the mountains where the transport column was bivouacked, we could hear the double cannonade from the Germans on the north and the Bulgarians on the east, drawing nearer hour by hour, showing that the claws of the vice were slowly but surely closing in on us. A number of pessimists regarded our capture as certain, but as we could do nothing till the exhausted bullocks were fed and rested, we could only possess our souls in patience with such philosophy as we might.

As I and my French colleague still had the two horses which survived the disaster to our carriage tethered to our ox wagon, we had always the possibility, on the condition that we abandoned all our other worldly possessions, of being able to keep out of the actual clutches of the enemy by taking to the mountains.

## CHAPTER VII

### KURSHOUMLIA TO PRISTINA

THE exhausted state of our oxen forced us to pass three anxious days at Kurshoumlia. The second day the dull boom of guns to our right confirmed the report that the Germans were at Rashka. We were therefore nearly completely surrounded, the Germans being to the north, the Austro-Germans to the west and the Bulgarians to the east. The only line of retreat was to the south toward Pristina. If both the armies we were with and the First Army marching via Mitrovitza reached there in safety, the entire armed force of Serbia would be concentrated round that town.

Our wagon was lying on the steep slope of a wind-swept mountain. Our two wretched horses, which had suffered greatly from the scarcity of forage on the march through the pass, were turned loose to graze. A hundred yards or so behind us on the crest of the hill was a bare, sun-parched plateau on which were a series of half-ruined trenches, the last vestiges of the war against Turkey. Here the

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## ‘Kurshoumlia to Pristina

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artillery had established some anti-air guns to drive off any of the enemy's aeroplanes which might be tempted to bomb the closely-packed wagon park. Behind- these a Serbian aeroplane lay under the guard of a sentry. It was ready, at the first signal, to go to meet the attack of any German airmen. ' From time to time it also made a flight to reconnoitre the position of the army of Field-Marshal von **Mackensen**. The troops holding the Bulgarians in check at **Prokuplje** had also been reinforced by the troops which had safely debouched from the pass, so that we could breathe more freely. The chances of a successful advance by the Bulgarians had now much diminished.

In the afternoon of the day following our arrival, I paid a visit to the village of Kurshoumlia. I found it crowded to excess. The streets were filled with an extraordinary mass of wagons, motor-cars, guns, pontoon trains, horses, men and oxen. A military wireless station was crackling away busily sending reports and receiving orders from the Headquarters Staff. Long columns were still pouring from the pass we had quitted the day before. At the other extremity of the village other columns, which had been reposing for three or four days, were pouring out in the direction of Pristina. As soon as they evacuated their bivouacs their places were at once taken by the newcomers. The wretched oxen of

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the arriving columns dragged themselves along with hanging heads in the last stages of physical exhaustion. Many had lost their shoes in the rocky defiles and were limping badly. Shoeing shops had, however, been installed in every wagon park. The shoeless beasts were thrown on their backs, their feet roped to a wooden tripod, and in a few minutes the thin metal plates were again attached to their hoofs.

We found that the money crisis which had long been threatening had now become acute. No one would accept the Serbian ten dinar notes, and -as those who still possessed silver money refused to part with it, things were rapidly approaching a deadlock. Nearly all the civil population had left and the staffs of the Second and Third Armies were already en route for Pristina. All that remained in the village were a few subaltern functionaries, some military surgeons and Red Cross sections and the commanders of the units. left to cover the retreat and delay the advance of the enemy.

The National Stanitza, or official headquarters, was besieged by a crowd of wounded, stragglers and soldiers who had lost touch with their regiments. They all demanded bread, but only the wounded were served. The others received the curt and apparently harsh order; "Eat maize." As if to excuse his apparent harshness the commissary turned to me and said in a low voice, "I can't tell the poor devils

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## Kurshoumlia to Pristina

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that all is lost, that there is no hope of the Allies coming to our assistance, and that we have only flour and fodder for two more weeks."

In the streets not a single woman was to be seen. All the shops, except a pharmacy, a hairdresser, and a cafe were closed. We entered the latter. Seated on the ground were a hundred or so soldiers without arms, their uniforms in rags and covered with dust, many of them wounded, and all in the last stage of physical exhaustion. They were drinking raki, the national spirit of Serbia. The terrible state of the atmosphere soon drove us out, we preferred the monotonous solitude of our bivouac.

As night fell the spectacle was a wonderful one. On all the amphitheatre of hills thousands of camp-fires were burning. In our bivouac we passed what seemed interminable hours. The cold was intense and wood was none too plentiful. Seated round the fires the "Komordjis," or wagon drivers, turned and re-turned before the flames the long linen rags in which they envelop their feet before putting on the heavy leather moccasins with upward pointed toes which constitute their footwear. At night the faithful Stanco made a bed for us under the tilt of the wagon with boxes of shells for a mattress and cases of Russian rifle cartridges for a pillow.

But the enemy was advancing continually, and we had again to get en route, join once more the



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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endless columns marching from morning to night in the mud and rain. It was blowing half a gale which drove the rain in sheets before it in sudden squalls.

The whole Serbian Army, with the exception of the few divisions required to fight the rearguard actions necessary to delay the advance of the German and Bulgarian Armies, was now again in retreat. It was clear that a certain amount of indecision prevailed as to the future operations. The probability of the retreat ending in a disaster was becoming more obvious day by day. The embarrassments of the Government had reached such a point that the civil and military administrations threatened to collapse beneath the strain. In fact, the civil administration had already done so. The whole of the population of northern and southern Serbia was now pouring into the former Sandjak of Novi Bazaar and the Albanian province lying between Pristina and Prisrend. Ninety per cent. of these people had no money and no food, and even if they had had money, unless it was in silver, it would have been no good to them, as the peasants and villagers refused to accept paper in any form.

As a consequence, the Government had to rescind its order that all the male population above fourteen years of age should retreat before the Germans. The problem of feeding these hundreds of thousands

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## Kurshoumlia to 'Pristina

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of fugitives had proved an' unsolvable one, and they we-re now ordered to return to their homes.. But it was one thing to give an order and another to carry it out. The tide of human misery which had been flowing to the Sandjak and towards Albania had now turned back, and was flowing northward. But as they had already swept the country clean of every kind of provisions on their southward march, they entered a desert when they started to re-traverse it on the homeward Journey. Every minute or two I met groups of gaunt, hollow-eyed men and women, dragging themselves wearily back along the roads they had had so much difficulty in passing a few days before. One often came on a dead body or on some poor wretch who had lain down to die.

The valley from Kurshoumlia along the banks of the Kosanitza is one of savage grandeur, black basaltic mountains, their summits capped with snow, towering on either hand. I learned on the third day of the march that a flying Bulgarian column had climbed over these mountains and had attacked an Army Service Column which had bivouacked, in the village in which I had slept the night before. Over forty men were massacred, many being tortured to death, and all the bullocks and horses driven off by the Albanian rebels who had guided the Bulgarians over the mountains. From a military point of view the raid was of little importance, as the raiders were

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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unable even to carry off the contents of the wagons, but it was a proof that the feelings of the Albanian population towards their Serbian conquerors of four years ago was still tinged with hostility.

The very strictest measures had to be taken to prevent horses, forage and material of all kinds being stolen during the night. The sentry in our camp one night shot an Albanian horse thief dead, which certainly did not contribute to improve the relations with the man's native village. It was, in fact, a relief when we saw on the horizon the line of the old Turkish blockhouses which formerly guarded the Albanian frontier-line, as it was a sign that the passage through the mountain gorge was drawing to an end, and that we would soon debouch on the mountain plateau.

I travelled all day with four batteries of 15.5 centimetre guns, each drawn by fourteen powerful oxen, which were coming from Prokuplje, where they had been holding the Bulgarians at bay while the Second and Third Armies were traversing the Krushevatz-Kurshoumlia pass. The officers told me they had no other orders than to retreat in the direction of Pristina, and were marching in that direction until they should receive fresh instructions. As we climbed toward the upper plateau, the cold was intense, a violent north-easterly gale driving a violent snowstorm before it. But in spite of all obstacles;

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## Kurshoumlia to Pristina

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the endless columns of infantry, cavalry, artillery and baggage train moved steadily southward, and we had the certainty that if the rate of progress was kept up, we would be in Pristina in three days' time.

About two in the afternoon we left the pass and entered the plateau. There was an instant improvement in the road, the rocky and muddy mountain route giving way to a fine, broad highway in excellent repair, over which one could have driven a motor-car at sixty miles an hour. Under these improved conditions I ordered the horses to be saddled, and my French confrere and myself pushed ahead to look for quarters for the night.

These we were fortunate enough to find in the gendarmerie headquarters, a large and roomy building with stabling for over fifty horses. In fact, it was more a fortress than a house. It had been constructed by the Turks fifty years ago as one of the centres for maintaining order among the wild Albanian tribesmen. A couple of score of Albanians were employed as stable hands, water-carriers, woodcutters, etc. It was significant of the relations between them and their Serbian conquerors that if one of them was sent to the well a hundred yards away to draw a bucket of water, he was accompanied by a gendarme with a loaded rifle. If this was not done, I was informed, the Albanian would

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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give “ leg bail ” the instant he turned the corner. All the gates were kept bolted and barred with a sentry outside to keep the men employed within the building from taking to flight. As the Serbians, twelve months ago, disarmed the whole Albanian population, the latter was helpless as far as the use of physical force was concerned, but it can easily be imagined what a favourable territory it was for the activities of German . and Bulgarian spies.

We arrived at Pristina on the afternoon of the 15th November. We found that with the flood of Serbian refugees, the Albanian element, generally predominant, had been somewhat submerged. During the last two days’ march our bullock wagon was attached to the Provision Column of the Combined Division, one of the corps *d’élite* of the Serbian Army. The nineteen-year-old wife of the major in command rode with him at the head of the column ; for twelve months past. she had shared all the fatigues of the campaign. She told me she was married ten days before the declaration of war by Austria, and three days after the wedding her husband left her to join his regiment. Three months later he was brought back to Belgrade with a splinter of a six-inch shell in his chest and lay for weeks between life and death. As soon as he was able to ride a horse again

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## Kurshoumlia to Pristina

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he asked to be at least allowed to serve in the army transport. His wife had accompanied him, and for the past year had shared the fortunes of the Serbian Army.

Pristina presented an extraordinary spectacle. On the amphitheatre of hills surrounding the town were camps and bivouacs extending as far as the eye could reach, while every road right up to the horizon was filled with endless columns, horse, foot, artillery and transport, all pouring toward the town. The narrow streets were filled to overflowing with Serbian soldiers of every arm, French aviators and engineer officers, British soldiers of the Marine Gun Battery, and French, Russian, Greek, British and Roumanian Red Cross doctors and nurses.

A curious optimism prevailed. Rumours of the most extraordinary nature were in circulation ; the Bulgarians had been driven back from Prokuplje, Serbian patrols had re-entered Nish, Uskub had been recaptured, a Russian Army had entered Bulgaria and occupied Negotin, etc., etc. But there is no country in the world where one has to be more distrustful of rumour than Serbia. The fact that the whole Second and Third Armies were continuing their movement of retreat discounted considerably the reported successes at Prokuplje and Nish. The recapture of Uskub had been so often announced and as often denied, that I felt I would

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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want better authority than rumours in the bazaar of Pristina.

On the contrary, everything went to show that the position was as critical as ever and growing more desperate. every hour. No one seemed to know either where the Government or the Headquarters were. I inquired at half a dozen points, but could only get the vaguest kind of reply till by accident I met a colonel who is principal aide-de-camp to King Peter. He told me the King had arrived in Pristina two hours before, and that both the Government and Headquarters Staff were at Mitrovitza, forty, kilometres distant. The situation, he informed me; was getting blacker every hour, and unless the Serbian Army could, by a last desperate effort, break the circle of bayonets that was slowly but surely closing in on it, its fate was sealed.

The money crisis was as acute as ever, and we were rapidly approaching famine prices. I had to pay **20** dinars for adding a thickness of leather to the soles of my boots. At any other time a couple of dinars would have been regarded as exorbitant. An attempt had been made to relieve the monetary situation by putting postage stamps in circulation, but-after a day or two these in their turn ceased to have the public confidence. Maize bread was being sold in the streets at **5** dinars the two-pound loaf, instead of **25** centimes. The soldiers, however, continued to

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### **Kurshoumlia to Pristina**

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receive their usual rations. There was, I was told, food for the men and forage for the animals for ten days more ; after that time famine would be staring us in the face. This, of course, only referred to the Army ; the civil population had been face to face with starvation long ago.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RETREAT OF THE FIRST ARMY FROM KRALJEVO TO PRISTINA

**A**T Pristina we were able to get some particulars of the retreat of the First Army under the Voivode Zhivoin Mishitch, which had been marching through the mountains on a line parallel to that of the Second and Third Armies with which we 'had been. This route ran from Kraljevo via Rashka to Mitrovitza, whence the route lay across the plain of Kossovo to Pristina.

I have already, in an earlier chapter, described my visit to Kraljevo, where the Government and the Diplomatic Corps had taken refuge on the 18th October, when the advance of the Bulgarians had menaced Nish. A part of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, which had not been able to find lodgings in Kraljevo, was quartered at Tchatchak, a small town a few miles from Kraljevo. A few days later, the 26th October, the turning movement executed from the west by the Austro-German forces under General von Gallwitz threatened first **Uzhitze** and then Tchatchak, and caused orders to be given for the immediate evacuation

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## The Retreat of the First Army from Kraljevo

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of these towns. This was carried out between the 26th and 29th October. Simultaneously came the news that the Headquarters Staff had evacuated Kraguyevatz, and installed itself at Krushevatz. Two days later the Government and the Diplomatic Corps quitted Kraljevo to traverse the pass through the mountains to gain Rashka, on the frontier of what was formerly the Turkish Sandjak of Novi Bazaar.

With the Government the population of all the towns threatened by the Austro-German advance poured like a flood through the mountain pass. On all the routes converging toward the valley of the Ibar marched thousands of homeless, starving people. As they approached the mountains they found the towns and villages becoming smaller and smaller and less able to afford hospitality to the population in flight. Thousands were forced to camp in the open in the pouring rain, their miserable wagons, filled with such furniture and household goods as they had been able to save, parked in the mud, surrounded by the cattle, sheep and pigs they had been able to drive with them.

At first the army was in the rear of this fleeing mass, fighting a rearguard action with the advancing enemy and holding them in check. But soon they were menaced on their rear just as the Second and Third Armies had been, and forced to traverse the mountains in all haste so as to gain the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar

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## Through the Serbian Campaign.

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before the enemy could close the other end of the pass.

As a consequence the retreating army soon swelled the ranks of the fleeing population. The troops found the roads encumbered with a mass of peasants, wagons, herds of cattle, droves of sheep and all the impedimenta of a nation in flight. It was only at the price of tireless effort that the troops, the artillery and the baggage train forced its way along the crowded roads. The spectacle of this starving multitude was continually under the eyes of the retreating troops, and naturally did not tend to encourage them. Many of the regiments were themselves without bread, and wept tears of rage at their helplessness to succour or defend their starving compatriots.

A French surgeon who took part in this terrible march gave me the following account of their journey :

“ Our group,” he said, “ consisted of Drs. Collet and Gandart (two surgeons with the rank of Colonel), nine surgeon-majors, six assistant surgeons and seven nurses. We managed, after a long search, to find five ox-wagons to transport the more indispensable part of our ambulance outfit and our baggage. We left Kraljevo on November 3rd. All we had in the way of provisions were a few pounds of biscuits. We had not a single cooking utensil.

“ We marched on foot, forcing our way with difficulty through the mass of people and vehicles

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## The Retreat of the First Army from Kraljevo

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which blocked the route. By sundown we had not discovered any signs of a village, and determined to camp for the night in a majestic amphitheatre of desolate, snow-capped mountains. On the opposite side of the Ibar, on one of the loftiest summits of the range, we could see the ruins of an immense castle. These were the ruins of the castle of Maglitch, the 'Castle of the Mists,' dating from the time of Stephen Nemanja, who reigned in Serbia in the Middle Ages.

"Here we installed ourselves as best we could. We cut some maize in a neighbouring field to make ourselves a bed. Luckily we had met en route a peasant driving some sheep, who had sold us one. This we roasted whole on a spit made from the branch of a tree.. When it was cooked we cut it up, by the 'light of a guttering candle, with our pocket-knives, and managed thus to stay our hunger.

"After this meal we lay down on our bed of maize straw, pressing, one against the other for warmth, for the cold was severe. At first the night was fine and starlit, but after midnight a wind sprang up, bringing with it the rain, which fell in a deluge.

"At six o'clock, soaked to the skin and frozen to the marrow, we resumed our weary march. We marched all day without anything to eat, and when at last, completely exhausted, we stopped for the night, we had not even maize straw to make a bed and were

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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forced to sleep on the bare ground on the side of the mountain. Some Austrian prisoners who arrived at our halting-place had managed to find some wood and built some fires. We gathered round these and boiled some tea, which we drank without sugar. We passed the night without sleeping beside the fires, and at dawn resumed our weary march. It was evening before we reached Rashka, where we arrived famished, exhausted, and half dead with cold,”

Rashka in its turn became for a week the new capital of Serbia. Here the Government, the Diplomatic Corps and the Headquarters Staff took up its quarters. A French confrere, M. Henry Barby, who took part in the retreat of the First Army, met M. Pashitch, the Serbian Prime Minister, on the bridge over the Ibar, regarding the landscape with a melancholy gaze. “It is here that Serbia had its birth,” he remarked, “God grant that Rashka may not be its tomb.”

But it was impossible for the Government and the First Army to remain longer at Rashka. They could only stop there as long as the Second and Third Armies were between them and the Bulgarians, and were in a position to prevent the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen from debouching from the **Krushevatz-Kurshoumlia** pass at the latter village. When these armies continued their retreat towards Pristina, the First Army, in order to maintain the liaison with them,

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## **The Retreat of the First Army from Kraljevo**

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had to resume its march and fall back towards Mitrovitza.

Once there the Government would again find itself in contact with a railway, the line which runs from Mitrovitza to Uskub via Vouchitrn and Pristina. As Uskub was for a long time past in the hands of the Bulgarians, it could only be utilized as far as Lipljan, a station thirty kilometres beyond Pristina, whence the road runs to Prisrend on the frontier of Albania.

## CHAPTER IX

### AT MITROVITZA

AS it was difficult to get any clear idea of the situation without finding out definitely the position of the First Army and the intentions of the Government and Headquarters Staff, I determined to take the train to Mitrovitza, forty kilometres distant, where the latter were established. It was also rumoured that that nomadic banking establishment, the Banque France-Serbe, was moving with the Government, and as my money was beginning to run low I was anxious to get a cheque on Paris cashed by it.

The railway to Mitrovitza runs across the historic plain of Kossovo, where five centuries ago Serbia, after a last desperate battle, fell under the domination of the Turks. The tomb of the Turkish Sultan Murad I., who was slain by a wounded Serbian soldier in the very moment of his victory, is one of the striking features of the landscape. The battle of Kossovo, though it ended in the defeat of the Tsar Lazar's Serbian Army, 'is one of the most glorious feats of arms in the annals of Serbia, and its memory five centuries

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## At Mitrovitza

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later spurred on the army of King Peter to fresh acts of heroism.

One of the curious features of railway building in the Balkans is that the railway stations are always at considerable distance from the towns they serve. In Pristina the distance is no less than ten kilometres or two hours' good -walking. The major in command of our transport column 'kindly lent my French colleague and myself a two-horse carriage to convey us to the station, and about midday we were *en route* across the historic plain of Kossovo for Mitrovitza. During the whole 'forty kilometres we had ample evidence that the retreat on Pristina continued. The roads were filled with endless lines of transport convoys, while in every station train after train was being loaded and sent off.

In the train I met a Russian confrere, the correspondent of the Novoe *Vremia*. He had been with the troops opposing the Bulgarian advance from Nish and Prokuplje, and had fallen back with them to Pristina. He was desirous of crossing by Ipek and Andreyevitza, to send off his dispatches from the powerful French wireless station at Podgoritza, in Montenegro, now our only means of communication with the outer world.

At Mitrovitza a disappointment awaited us. The Government and Headquarters had left by special train for Prisrend an hour before. Not only this,



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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but orders had been given to evacuate the town and the last train, we were told, would leave at one o'clock the following day. There was nothing for it but to wait for this train, so we tramped off to the town situated, as usual, a mile or two from the station. We found the inhabitants of Mitrovitz in a state of panic. All the Turkish shops and cafes were closed and barricaded.

There is no doubt the sympathies of the Mohammedan portion of the population were with the German invaders, but as there were large bodies of Serbian troops in the town and still more outside opposing the German advance, the terrified inhabitants saw the possibility, not to say the probability, of a German bombardment. Thousands were, therefore, preparing to evacuate the city. I saw that the prospects of the one o'clock train next day being taken by assault by a crowd of terror-stricken fugitives were very great, so that when my Russian colleague arrived with the news that there would be a special train sent off at six o'clock in the morning, we determined to travel by it if possible. But meantime the problem was to find food and lodging. No one would accept a centime in paper money. Fortunately we possessed small but sufficient store of silver pieces, and were able to procure a very unsatisfactory meal, and a still more unsatisfactory bed above a Turkish cafe.

As the town was plunged in Egyptian darkness

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## At Mitrovitza

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and there was no amusement: in stumbling along narrow, deserted Turkish lanes and alleys, there was nothing for it but to go to bed at eight o'clock. About midnight\* I was awakened by sounds of life and movement in the street below. -There were sounds of rolling vehicles and trampling feet. I thought at first it was the population in flight, but the sound was too regular for that. I got up and went to the window. It was the First Serbian Army in full retreat.

By the light of the guttering lantern swinging above the door of our cafe, I could see company after company, squadron after squadron, and battery after battery pouring past. Hour after hour the steady " tramp, tramp " of thousands of feet echoed in the narrow streets. It was four o'clock in the morning when the last battery rumbled through, the roll of the wheels drowning the soft patter of the hoofs of the oxen drawing the guns.

And then it began to rain, and such rain ! Talk of the " Windows of heaven being opened," the whole side of the house was out. It came down in sheets, it came down in buckets, it rained ramrods. The gutters in the centre of the streets became rushing torrents, while Niagaras poured from all the overhanging eaves. And in' the midst of this deluge we had to set out for the station three miles away. The road, which yesterday had been muddy, was

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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to-day a “slough of despond.” In the Egyptian darkness there was no means of avoiding pools and puddles. The chilly rain, driven by half a gale, blinded one, and every now and then we would splash right up to the knees in pools of muddy water.

At last we reached the station soaked to the skin, only to learn that the supposed special train was a myth and that there would be no means of transport back to Pristina till one o'clock in the afternoon. The idea of splashing our way back to our cheerless room in the cafe in the rain and darkness was beyond my courage, I declared that I would first try to dry myself at the immense fire burning in the station-master's office, and wait for daylight. Every moment the gale increased in fierceness, while the cold became more intense. The rain had long since turned to snow. I thought of the plight of the twenty thousand men of the First Army-whom I had seen tramping through the town, and who were now out in the desolation of the plain of Kossovo, on their forty kilometres' march to Pristina.

Just at this moment a locomotive backed into the station and stood throbbing and humming opposite the station-master's office. “Where is it bound for?” I asked him. “Pristina.” “Can't we travel by it?” He looked at our blue, white and red *brassards* (which meant that we were attached to the Headquarters) hesitatingly, but finally said,

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## At Mitrovitza

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“ No, it’s quite impossible.” He must, however, have consulted someone in authority, for two minutes later he came running in to announce, “ If you can be ready in half a minute, you can take the engine.” It did not take us more than ten seconds to climb aboard, and a minute later we shot out into the blizzard. Unfortunately we were running tender first, so that we had no protection against the weather. But we were too glad to get away from Mitrovitza to worry about such trifles. Every now and then we dashed through flooded parts of the line with the water up to the footplate. When the line ran alongside the road we could see that it was strewn with the dead bodies of horses and oxen which had succumbed to cold and fatigue.

When we got to Pristina station we found it a scene of wintry desolation. It was thronged with thousands of troops waiting to entrain, who sought shelter from the snow, which was now being driven by a regular hurricane, behind sheds, out-houses and station buildings. In the station-master’s office I met an English officer in the Serbian Service, who was waiting to entrain with his machine-gun section. He gave us the latest news and, what was still better, some excellent French brandy from his pocket flask. But if the brandy was good, it was more than could be said of the news, which was as bad as could be. The Serbian Army was menaced from all sides. Only

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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one line of retreat remained open to it in the direction of Prisrend. The Headquarters Staff had, therefore, decided to abandon the tactics of retreat which had been imposed on them by the Allies, to take the offensive and to risk one last desperate battle to retrieve the situation.

Since the Austro-German attack on the Danube, the instructions of the Allies to the Serbian Staff had been to avoid risking everything on a pitched battle and to retreat slowly, delaying the advance of the enemy as much as possible, until the Allies should be in a position to come to their assistance. This the Serbians had done for nearly six weeks, with the result that they were now almost 'forced back against the mountains of Albania, and the Allies seemed as far as ever from being able to help them.

The Serbian General Staff had therefore decided the only chance left was to hurl the whole Serbian Army on the Bulgarians' positions in the south, burst their way over the Katchanik mountain range and recapture Uskub. Once there, they could give their hand to the French force and form a new front facing east, with Salonica as their *point d'appui* on their extreme right. It was a last and desperate throw of the dice, a forlorn hope to be undertaken with an army almost in a state of exhaustion. But there was a fighting chance of success, and- the retreat on Prisrend meant nothing but disaster.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SERBIAN OFFENSIVE

AS the blizzard still continued, my French confrère and I stopped as long as we could in the railway station of Pristina, watching all day the entraining of the Serbian Army, now en route for its offensive in the Katchanik mountains against the Bulgarians. Regiment after regiment and battery after battery lined up under the pitiless blast of the tempest and in the driving snow to await their turn to entrain. The men were chilled to the very bone and had before them a long railway journey in open trucks, exposed to the fierce gale. On arriving at their destination, they would have to begin their weary march in the snow-covered mountains, advancing against an enemy strongly entrenched. Their task seemed one above human powers, but it was the one last desperate chance in the terrible game of war.

No other choice was left to them. The Austro-German force, under General von Gallwitz, advancing from the north-west was only fifteen short miles away. Field-Marshal von Mackensen, on the north,

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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was slowly but surely drawing nearer to Pristina, while a Bulgarian Army was pouring from the southwest. As the whole of the southern frontier, from Strumnitza to Monastir was now in the possession of the Bulgarians, the circle of steel round the doomed Serbian Army was almost complete. Only one single line of retreat still remained open to it, the route to Prisrend. But that route offered no salvation. The enemy's line would close in as inexorably on Prisrend as it was doing on Pristina, and at Prisrend no further retreat would be possible, the limits of Serbian territory would be reached. Beyond Prisrend lay the desolate mountain ranges of Albania.

The fate of King Peter's gallant army therefore depended on the last throw of the dice, a desperate offensive to break the encircling Bulgarian line in the direction of Uskub. If the attempt should be a success and should be supported by a simultaneous attack by the Allies from Salonica, there was just a fighting chance that the Serbs might be able to join hands with the French and British troops. If this were done, it would at least offer a safe line of retreat into Greek territory.

The officers with whom I talked in the railway station had few illusions as to the possible success of this desperate effort. Their troops were exhausted and discouraged by their three-hundred-mile march from the Danube. Desertions had been

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## The Serbian Offensive

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numerous and provisions and fodder were running low. The effort seemed **beyond** the strength of the much-tried army. But, as I have said, it was the last hope, and as such it was accepted. Officers and men braced themselves for this final effort.

But when three o'clock arrived, we could no longer delay our departure for Pristina. We had a two hours' tramp before us to reach the town, and by five o'clock night. **would** be beginning to fall. In Serbia there is little -or no twilight, darkness follows a few minutes after the setting of the sun. As we had to find our wagon among a mass of ten thousand parked on the mountains round the town, we did **not** want to reach Pristina after nightfall.

When we emerged from the station a wonderful sight met our eyes. As far as the eye could reach, the snow-covered plain of Kossovo extended on every side. Every feature of the landscape was blotted out by- a **shroud** of snow feet deep: Over this, long lines of snow-clad figures could be seen moving, the columns extending for miles. These were Serbian regiments -starting on their weary march to the mountain range over which they must force their way to attempt to join hands with the French. They had a peculiarly ghostly appearance due to the fact that every man tried to protect himself from the driving snow by wrapping himself in the section of tent canvas he carries.



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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By this time the wind had fallen, and the curious silence which accompanies heavy snow reigned everywhere. In every direction were the ghostly columns plodding in single file over fields and along roads. On all sides were dead horses and oxen, singly and in heaps, half buried in snow, with swarms of carrion crows whirling and croaking overhead. It was a realization of the retreat from Moscow such as I never expected to see. The gaunt, half-starved faces of the passing soldiers did nothing to destroy the illusion.

When, after a two hours' tramp, we reached Pristina a fresh surprise awaited us. All the hills around the town, which twenty-four hours before had been covered with tens of thousands of transport wagons, were absolutely deserted. The red rays of the setting sun lit up nothing but rolling miles of virgin snow, not a wagon or an ox was to be seen. On climbing to the summit of the hill where we had left the transport of the Combined Division, with which was our baggage wagon, we found nothing left but the four field guns which had been placed in battery there to defend the convoys against aircraft. All the men of the battery could tell us was that the whole transport had inspanned and left two hours after our departure for Mitrovitza, the previous day. One of the men thought we would find it in camp near the station, but he was not sure.

The situation was not a cheerful one. There we

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## The Serbian Offensive

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were at nightfall on a snow-covered, desolate mountain, with the wagon (which contained our food and baggage and formed our sleeping quarters) and our two horses completely disappeared. All we possessed in the world was the clothes we stood up in, and this in a town where accommodation was not to be had and food non-existent. Then I remembered that two days before I had found lodgings for three French Red Cross nurses who were leaving for Prisrend. If they had left their rooms might be vacant. They took some finding in the darkness, but we finally located them. We found them in occupation of a Russian military doctor and his staff. He had stabled the wagons and pack-horses of his ambulance in the courtyard, while he and his six aides had commandeered the rooms. But in war time where there's room for six there's room for eight, and he gave up a corner of the floor as our sleeping accommodation. He informed us the Headquarters Staff of the Second Army had arrived in Pristina. This solved the question of food till we should find our wagon, if we ever should do so. While we were dining at the mess that evening we received confirmation of the Serbian offensive in the direction of Uskub. It was clear that it was looked upon as a forlorn hope, a fighting chance that might enable the Serbians to retrieve an apparently hopeless situation. At the same time no one had any illusions as to the desperate

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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nature of the task, in view of the terrible privations and fatigues through which the troops had just passed. But the courage and self-sacrifice of the Serbian soldier seem to have no limits, and it was felt that what was humanly possible would be done.

The whole of the next day we devoted to a fruitless hunt for our missing wagon. The only clue to its possible whereabouts was that the Transport Column of the Combined Division was encamped at Lipljan, a village about -thirty kilometres distant. On the departure of the Russian doctor and his ambulance from the house where we had been stopping we had offered hospitality to a section of the Scottish Women's, Medical Unit, which was en *route* for Prisrend. As the sections had to pass through Lipljan, Miss Chesney, the doctor in charge, offered us seats in their automobile. On arriving at Lipljan, we discovered that the Transport Column had already left. All we could find out was that it was marching in the direction of Prisrend.. We therefore. arranged to continue our journey with the Scottish ambulance.

All day long at Lipljan we could hear the- battle raging. The mountain range to our left was the scene of the fighting. During the whole afternoon I watched, with my field-glass, the Bulgarian shrapnel bursting along the crest. At one moment. a couple of companies of 'Bulgarian infantry even managed to slip between the Serbian lines and pushed forward

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## The Serbian Offensive

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till they were able to open fire on the railway station about 300 yards from where our ambulance was encamped. They were unaware that a Serbian cavalry regiment was in bivouac behind a number of haystacks about a mile away. This regiment hastily saddled and went off at a fast trot. A few minutes later they were at the railway station. The men drew carbines and dismounted, and in twenty minutes the Bulgarians were driven off. The usual endless line of army transport was pouring through Lipljan from Pristina. The conductors kept looking anxiously at the line of bursting shrapnel along the crests of the mountain six miles away; they evidently realized that if the Bulgarians should win the heights it would be all up with the transport on the Pristina and Prisrend road.

When I went to sleep that night in Lipljan I could still hear the sound of the guns. Next morning we discovered the Scottish ambulance was gone. About two o'clock in the morning there had been a tremendous outburst of heavy gun-fire in the mountains. It seemed so near that the nurses had got alarmed, struck camp, loaded their wagons and automobiles and gone off. So my French confrere and I were finally reduced to tramp our way to Prisrend. Fortunately the weather was fine and the roads passable, and we covered our 35 kilometres a day without difficulty. In the evening we managed

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## Through the Serbian 'Campaign

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to find a blockhouse with a gendarmerie officer in command who requisitioned us a room in the house of an Albanian peasant named **Sali** Aga. Once, the details of price arranged (all, I may mention, in the favour of **Sali** Aga) he received us with patriarchal dignity, treating us as honoured guests. He killed and prepared a well-fed fowl and produced quantities of Albanian cheese and butter. Of course the only sleeping accommodation was straw alongside the fire, but as at one moment it had looked as if we would have to sleep by the roadside in the open air, we were thankful for even that.

The next day, about thirty kilometres from Prisrend I at last discovered the Commissariat Column of the Combined Division we had been looking for for five days past, in the hope of discovering our lost baggage wagon. The Major in command told me that when his column received orders to leave Pristina our 'man **Stanco** had left with our wagon for the- railway station to await our return from Mitrovitza. Since then he had not seen him. This was not cheerful, but the news he gave me from the front was less cheerful still.

At first the Serbian attack on the Bulgarian front in the Katchanik Mountains had been successful ; the Serbians had advanced to **Giljane**. King Peter's troops fought with desperate courage, driving the Bulgarians from one mountain summit after the other. But as soon as the Bulgarians realized the

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serious nature of the Serbian offensive they brought up reinforcements from all sides. With the Germans advancing in their rear the Serbians could not fight a long-drawn-out battle. It was for them a matter of life or death to break through the Bulgarian lines. If they failed to do so the two German Armies together with the Bulgarian forces coming from Nish, would take them in the rear. This would mean the complete encirclement of the Serbian Army and its unconditional surrender.

In addition to the military problem there was also that of food supplies. The territory still in the hands of the Serbian Army now amounted to only a few hundred square kilometres. It was out of the question that this could furnish supplies for an army, even for a few days. In the transport wagons of the Combined Divisions there were, the Major told me, supplies for barely two weeks. After these were consumed it would be impossible to renew them. Other divisions were even in worse case. The same held good of munitions. Each division had what they carried with them and what was contained in the wagons of the Reserve Columns. Ten days would see the last cartridge fired. The question of forage for the horses and transport oxen was even more acute. The whole country had been swept clean of corn, oats, hay and maize, and in less than a week's time there would be a hundred thousand animals starving.

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The advance on Uskub had been an effort beyond the strength of the exhausted Serbian Army, and from all reports it had fought to a standstill, which, under the circumstances, was equivalent to defeat. The cause of Serbia was lost. The valiant little nation which had fought a victorious war with Turkey, had repulsed the treacherous attack of Bulgaria, had conducted a successful campaign in Albania, and administered to Austria one of the most crushing defeats in her history, had at last been beaten to her knees by an irresistible coalition of her enemies. After four years of ceaseless war, in which the flower of her manhood had died on the battlefield, Serbia with her 200,000 bayonets, the last levies of a heroic people, was face to face with 700,000 enemies with practically unlimited resources of war material. Her Allies were powerless to aid her, so that her King and Government were now forced to take the supreme resolution in this hour of stress.

On entering Prisrend I found it a cosmopolitan city. Hundreds of French aviators, automobilists, engineers and Red Cross Units, Russian, British, Greek and Roumanian doctors and nurses, and English sailors of the naval gun batteries were everywhere en *évidence*. The blue and crimson uniforms of the Royal Guard showed that King Peter was in Prisrend. As the members of the Government, the Crown Prince **Commander-in-**

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Chief and the Headquarters Staff had also arrived, all that was left of the elements of Government in Serbia was assembled within the walls of the ancient Albanian city.

The one question on everybody's lips was "would it be an unconditional surrender ?" in which case we would all find ourselves- German prisoners forty-eight hours later, or would the King, the Government and the army leave Serbian territory and take refuge in Albania ? The final councils did not last long. On November 24th the supreme resolution was taken, the King, army and Government would refuse to treat with the enemy and would leave for Albania.

To this resolution several factors contributed. One of the chief was Serbia's loyalty to her Allies. She had undertaken not to sign a separate peace and she held to her word to the last. She might be defeated, she was not conquered. Another factor was the dynastic one. It was certain that one of the first conditions of peace which Germany, and- especially Austria, would have exacted.. would have been the abdication of King Peter. It was equally certain that M. Pashitch and the other members of the Government would have been arrested and probably exiled for life from Serbia. There was therefore nothing to be gained by surrender and as long as King Peter, his Government and his army



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escaped the clutches of their enemies, Serbia was unconquered. The treasury had long been placed in safety abroad, so that there was no want of funds to meet the expenses of the Government and army in exile.

Of course no one had any illusions as to the difficulties of the task the Government had undertaken. It meant that the army must abandon its artillery (excepting mountain guns), its transport wagons, its motor-cars, its pontoon trains, its artillery ammunition, in a word everything that could not be carried on the back of pack animals would have to be left behind. It was further impossible to transport the army with any system or order ; for that there was no time. Each unit, company, battalion or regiment, squadron or battery was given its place of rendezvous in Albania and told to get there as best it could. There were three routes, one to Scutari, through Montenegro, via Ipek and Andreyevitza ; another via Lioum-Koula, Dibra and El-Bassan to Durazzo ; and a third, that taken by the King, the Government and the Headquarters Staff, via Lioum-Koula, Spas and Puka to Scutari.

The roads (except the Dibra-El Bassan route) are mere sheep tracks over the mountains. Vehicular traffic in any shape or form is absolutely unknown. Every ounce of food would have to be carried on pack animals, or in the men's knapsacks. The same

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held good for forage. And this last effort was demanded from an army which had already reached the limit of human endurance, which 'was in a state of physical exhaustion, and in many instances without food and without munitions. It was under such conditions that 150,000 men, all that was left of the 300,000 of three months before, began their march across the endless ranges of snow-capped mountains.

Personally I received good news in Prisrend. Our long-lost wagon had been found. Our man **Stanco**, wisely abandoning the attempt to find us among the 100,000 fugitives crowding Pristina, had set out for Prisrend, which he had reached after five days' march. The horses, however, were gone. As he was travelling alone he had no one to mount guard at night, and as every Albanian is a born horse thief, their fate was sealed. On reaching Prisrend he had reported his arrival at the Headquarters Staff, leaving word where he was to be found. The loss of the horses was of no great importance. They could never have faced the crossing of the mountains with a hundred kilos of baggage on their backs. For that work one requires sure-footed, sturdy mountain ponies .

When I reached Headquarters the first thing I noticed was a score of soldiers burning the archives, staff maps, etc., a clear proof that the journey to Scutari was resolved on. During lunch I learned the last preparations that had been made. M.

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Pashitch. and the members of the Government were leaving for Scutari with a military escort the following day. The next day the King and the Royal Household with the Royal Guard would start, and on the third day Field-Marshal Putnik and the Headquarters Staff would leave for Scutari. As I and my French colleague of the Petit *Parisien* were attached to the Headquarters, Colonel Mitrovitch told me he had reserved a pack-horse for our baggage. All that was left of bread and biscuits would also be distributed the night before the march started.

It was a curious sensation to look round the large mess room, with its hundreds of brilliant uniforms worn by the men who had fought five victorious campaigns, and to think that in forty-eight hours' time they would be in exile, camping among the snows of the Albanian mountains, with the splendid armies they had commanded shrunk to 150,000 men, deprived of everything that goes to make an army in the field. Grief and bitterness were written on many a face many would have preferred to be in the fighting-line and to have died at the head of their men, rather than have seen this tragic hour.

One thing is certain, no reproach could be made to the Serbian Army ; it had done its duty, and more than its duty. It had fought with desperate courage against overwhelming odds, and if the armed strength of Serbia was crushed, her honour at least was intact..

## CHAPTER XI

### LAST DAYS IN SERBIA

**W**HEN I arrived at the Headquarters mess on Thursday, November **23rd**, the day of my arrival in Prisrend, I received some details of the latest movements of the enemy. The Serbian Headquarters Staff had arrived at Prisrend on November **17th**. Two days later it received news that the Austro-German Army under General von Gallwitz had occupied Rashka and Novi Bazaar.

On November **22nd** this force entered Mitrovitza, and pushing forward, on November **25th** rejoined the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen at Pristina. The whole of the Austro-German forces on the Balkans were therefore massed in that town. The same day the Bulgarians, occupying Lipljan with two- divisions, joined hands with their Austro-German Allies. Advancing toward Prisrend, the whole Austro-Germano-Bulgarian Army spread out its forces in a semicircle, surrounding all that was left of the Serbian Army and bringing it with its back to- the frontier of Albania.

On the day of my arrival I paid a visit to the

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citadel, perched on the hill on the slopes of which Prisrend is built. Here are the last traces of the stronghold erected by the Emperor Stephen Doushan, the Serbian Charlemagne. At my feet flowed the Bistritza, rushing in a torrent down through the town. To the east, at the extremity of a gorge, between towering mountains, I could see the snow-covered peaks of the Shar range, which formed a lofty barrier between us and the Bulgarians at Tetovo. To the left appeared the city of Prisrend, a vast agglomeration of Turkish and Albanian houses from which emerged the graceful minarets of its fifty mosques. Among these one could distinguish the belfry of the single Greek Orthodox Church. In an obscure corner was hidden a small Catholic chapel, the priest of which is subventioned by the Austrian Government.

In the afternoon arrived the news that the route from Dibra to Monastir had been cut, as the Bulgarians were at Prilep and advancing on Monastir. This extinguished the last hope of some part of the Serbian Army reaching that town to take train through Greece to Salonica. It was the *débâcle* all along the line.

After dinner in the evening a Major of the "Section des opérations" of the Headquarters Staff gave me a technical *résumé* of the operations on the various fronts for the past month.

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## Last Days in Serbia

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“ On the 28th of October,” he said, “ the Serbian Army had a small force in the south on the line Tetovo-Gostivar-Kitchevo and a detachment on the Babuna mountain. There was also a body of troops on the line Ferizovitch-Giljane.

“ In Old Serbia the forces were grouped as follows : There was an army corps on the left bank of the Western Morava on the front Gorny-Milanovatz-Kritsch. There was another army corps on the right bank of the Great Morava in the neighbourhood of Chupria and Parachin. A third army corps occupied the environs of Plotch near Nish.

“ The principal idea of the Headquarters Staff at this time was to concentrate all the available troops in the country between the Western Morava and the Southern Morava, and to reinforce the troops on the front Giljane-Ferizovitch, and there await the arrival of the French troops.

“ On November 2nd the troops on the left bank of the Western Morava had to give way before the superior force of the Germans, and retire to the right bank. The troops which were in the environs of Chupria and Parachin were in consequence forced to fall back toward the mountain of Jastrebatz, while the troops in the environs of Nish had to abandon their position and fall back on Lescovatz. The position of this force towards November 7th became very critical, as one of its divisions had suffered a

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severe check in the neighbourhood of Lescovatz. The line of retreat of this army corps, **Lipljan-Medvedje**, was threatened. This was the principal reason for hastening the retreat of all the army corps; while the troops which held on the right bank of the Western Morava were forced to retire towards Rashka.

“ The troops which had retired to the neighbourhood of Mount Jastrebatz were ordered to retire toward Kurshoumlia, Prepolatz and Pristina. Their instructions were to fall back slowly, defending every possible position as long as possible. Other smaller detachments fell back on Jankova Klissura.

“ Meanwhile the army corps which had received a check near Lescovatz had somewhat improved its position. It had been reinforced and made a successful attack on the Bulgarians which allowed it to utilize the line of retreat via Lipljan-Medvedje, which at one time was seriously menaced. It was therefore in a position to fall back towards Pristina.

“ It was in consequence possible to save the Serbian armies, and this in spite of the fact that the retreat had to be carried out through a country possessing few roads. What rendered the position extremely difficult was the fact that the pressure from the German armies in the north was combined with a Bulgarian offensive coming from the south,

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## Last Days in Serbia

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and which was deployed on a line running from Vranje to Lescovatz.

“ The Serbian Army at Rashka then received orders to occupy the line **Rashka-Novi Bazaar** to bar the route to Mitrovitza. All the remaining Serbian armies were **moved** to t-he Plain of **Kosovo**, and in a position to reinforce the troops in Macedonia and undertake a general offensive. The troops in Macedonia received orders if possible to recapture **Giljane** and prevent the Bulgarians debouching from the Katchanik.

“ In the battle near the Katchanik the Serbs succeeded in recapturing the very important position of Jegovatz ; but the task before them was beyond the strength of troops exhausted by weeks of fatigue and hardships. The forcing of the **strongly**-entrenched Bulgarian lines by an army whose rear was threatened by the two German and the Bulgarian Armies was beyond its strength, and it had to fall back on Prisrend.”

From November **24th** to 26th we were occupied in making preparations for our departure. The Headquarters Staff , headed by Field-Marshal Putnik, numbered, with its escort, over **300** persons, with more than **400** riding and baggage horses. The aged Voivode is, as I have already said, a martyr to asthma and unable to mount on horseback or face the bitter cold of the Albanian mountains. It is, however,



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utterly impossible to traverse the mountain roads in a wheeled vehicle of any sort. In consequence, it was resolved to construct a sort of sedan chair in which the veteran leader could be carried across the mountains on the shoulders of Serbian soldiers.

The French in Prisrend, consisting of the Aviation and other units, numbering altogether nearly 250 officers and men, resolved to cross the mountains by the same route as the Headquarters Staff, starting the day before it, immediately behind the King and the Royal Household. This detachment was under the command of Colonel Fournier, the French military attache, having as his lieutenant Major Vitrat, the head of the French Aviation Section. This section had rendered immense services to the Serbian Army throughout the whole retreat. Major Vitrat is an officer who would do credit to any army. I have rarely met a man of more decision of character, and certainly none of greater courage. His example inspired the Aviation Corps from its pilots to the last of its transport chauffeurs.

The French detachment was composed of three sailors from the naval gun battery of Belgrade, 94 automobile mechanics, 125 officers and men of the Aviation Section, and 5 wireless operators. The *personnel* was utilized according to its aptitude. A commission for the purchase of the necessary pack animals was formed of two observing officers of the

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## Last Days in Serbia

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Aviation Section, one a captain of hussars,. and the other a captain of artillery. The officers brought together what money they still possessed for the purchase of the provisions necessary for the journey, a matter of 18,000 francs.

This proved the most difficult part of the organization, as food and fodder were becoming rare. A certain amount of corn for the 70 pack horses of the expedition was found at a price of one franc the "oka" (the Turkish "oka" is about three English pounds), and ten sheep which accompanied the column and were killed and eaten as occasion required.

The next difficulty was the question of transport of half a dozen sick men in the detachment. Horses for their transport could not be found; and it was 'out of the question that they could be carried on stretchers by their comrades. Colonel Fournier solved the difficulty by ordering their transport by aeroplane. The Section- still possessed six machines capable of flying, in spite of the fact that for two and a half months they had been exposed night and day without shelter to wind, rain and snow. On Thursday, November 25th, the six aeroplanes started off across the mountains on their flight to Scutari. This was the first time in military annals that the aeroplane had been pressed into the ambulance service. But the innovation was a most successful one, the aeroplanes arriving in Scutari in less than

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half the number of hours that it took the rest of the detachment days in its march across the snow.-clad hills.

It was, indeed, with a certain envy that we watched the start of these ambulance-aeroplanes when we remembered the difficult task that lay before us before we could rejoin them in Scutari. Du Bochet and I arranged to travel with the French column, and handed to Major Vitrat the list of provisions which we could contribute to the common stock. The first *étape*, that from Prisrend to Lioum-Koula, is along a fairly good road. It was resolved to send on the pack animals the day before and to cover the thirty kilometres to Lioum-Koula, which is the last village on Serbian territory, in the automobiles of the Aviation Corps. As the road from "this point onward is a mere sheep track across the mountains, utterly impracticable for wheeled vehicles, the automobiles would there be destroyed in order to prevent **their** falling into the hands of the enemy.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MARCH ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS OF ALBANIA

**I**T was seven in the morning of Friday, November 26th, when we started on our march across the mountains to Scutari. Despite the depressing circumstances, the aviation detachment was in high spirits at the prospect of returning to France after a year of hardship in Serbian campaigning. At Lioum-Koula we were to destroy the automobiles, preliminary to starting on our 120-mile tramp. We had, however, to begin the ceremony prematurely, as six miles from the start one of the motors gave out. As there was neither time nor inclination to repair it, the vehicle, a ten-ton motor lorry, was run by hand into a field alongside the road, flooded with petrol -and set on fire. An instant later it was blazing merrily while the irrepressible younger spirits of the detachment executed a war dance round it, solemnly chanting Chopin's "Funeral March."

But it was at Lioum-Koula that we had the grand *feu d'artifice*. Near a bridge across the Drin the right bank of the river drops precipitously nearly 150 feet. One after another the huge motors were

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drenched with petrol and 'set on fire. The chauffeurs steered straight for the precipice, jumping clear as the cars shot over. The immense lorries rolled, crashing to the bottom, where they formed a blazing pile.

Twelve hours later I saw a crowd of 500 wretched Austrian prisoners gathered around the ruins. They had crawled down to warm themselves, and to roast chunks of meat cut from dead horses, at a blaze that had cost the French Republic a quarter of a million francs. The rest of the landscape was blotted out by the whirling blizzard through which the fiery tongues of flame were darting. Every now and then the explosion of a benzine tank would scatter the Austrians, but the temptation of warmth proved too much for them, 'and they soon returned.

Five minutes after the last car was over the precipice, Major Vitrat formed up his men, told off his advance and rearguards, gave the word "*en avant, marche,*" and the column swung off through the driving snow on the first *étape* of its long march. We had intended accompanying it to Scutari, but found that the bullock wagon with our baggage and our pack horse, which had left Prisrend the previous day, had failed to arrive. It did not put in its appearance until five o'clock in the evening, and, as a violent snowstorm was then raging, I did not care to tackle the mountain ascent in the dark to try to

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## The March across the Mountains of Albania

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find the 'French bivouac. There was, therefore, nothing for us to do but to -join the Headquarters Staff.

The event of the day was the arrival of the Voivode Putnik. The veteran Field-Marshal had been a martyr to. asthma for years past. He practically had not left his room for two years. This was always kept at a temperature of 86 degrees Fahrenheit. A seven days' mountain journey in a sedan-chair, carried by four soldiers, must have been a terrible experience for him. But the capture of their beloved Voivode by the Germans would have been regarded by the Serbians as a national disaster.

The next day it was still snowing, and the start for Scutari was delayed another twenty-four hours. As two years before, during the Albanian campaign, the Serbians had demolished all the houses in Lioum-Koula except four, accommodation was limited. I found lodgings in a huge ammunition tent. The gendarme in charge objected to my smoking cigarettes, which he said was strictly forbidden by the regulations, but he said nothing about the score of guttering candles burning on cartridge-boxes, or the spirit-lamp on a box labelled " shells," over which the wife of the colonel was preparing tea. When I drew his attention, to this he declared the regulations were silent on the subject of. candles and spirit-lamps, but distinctly mentioned cigarettes.

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All-day and night the troops bound for El-Bassan poured through Lioum-Koula. As we had nothing to do, I went out for a walk about five miles along the road. , Every five hundred yards or so. I came on dead bodies of men who had succumbed to cold or exhaustion. Coming back I encountered Captain Piagge, the English officer in Serbian service whom I had met at-the Pristina railway station, when he was leaving' to take part in the last desperate effort to advance on Uskub. When I had last seen him his machine gun section numbered about eighty-four men. At Lioum-Koula it had dwindled to twenty-six. He had all his guns intact, however, and delivered them, as I afterwards heard; safely at El-Bassan. The sufferings of the Serbians in the Katchanik Mountains had, he told me, been terrible. His section,. after passing the whole day in the blizzard at Pristina station, had, at midnight, with the temperature far below zero, been embarked on open trucks for its six hours' journey to the fighting-line. The men had nothing to eat except some maize bread and a few raw cabbages. As soon. as they left the train they had started on their march into the mountains. At first they were. successful, driving the Bulgarians from one mountain ridge after another. But fatigue -and privations soon told their tale, and in forty-eight hours his men had fought themselves to a standstill and nothing was left but retreat on Prisrend.

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## The March across the Mountains of Albania

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Probably not since the crossing of the Alps by Napoleon has such a military expedition been undertaken as the traversing of the Albanian mountains by the Headquarters Staff and the remains of the Serbian Army. But Napoleon made his march after long and careful preparation, while the unfortunate Serbs began theirs when their army was in the last stages of destitution, without food, with uniforms in rags, and with utterly inadequate means of transport.

The sight presented by Lioum-Koula on the eve of departure was unique. On the mountain side for miles nothing could be seen but endless fires. They were made by the burning of the thousands of ox-wagons, which were unable to go further, as the road for vehicles ceases at Lioum-Koula. Fortunately the snowstorm had ended and had been followed by brilliant sunshine.

Next morning at nine o'clock the Headquarters Staff set out. It included 300 persons and 400 pack animals. The road wound along the banks of the Drin, which had to be crossed twice by means of picturesque old single-span Turkish bridges, since destroyed to impede the Bulgarian advance.

The first mistake made was that of transporting the sedan-chair of Field-Marshal Putnik at the head of the procession. Every time it halted to change bearers, which was every fifteen minutes, the whole two-mile-long procession, following in single file,



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had to stop also. As a result, instead of reaching Spas before sundown, we only reached a village at the base of the mountain after darkness had fallen.

Here a long council was held as to whether we should bivouac in the village or undertake the mountain climb in the dark. After a discussion lasting three-quarters of an hour, during which the mass of men and animals stood shivering in the freezing cold, the latter course was decided upon. It was one of the most extraordinary adventures ever undertaken. A narrow path about four feet wide, covered with ice and snow, winds corkscrew fashion up the face of the cliff. On one hand, is a rocky wall and on the other a sheer drop into the Drin.

This road winds and twists at all sorts of angles, and it was up this that we started in the black darkness, with the sedan-chair of General Putnik still heading the procession. Every time it reached a corner it was a matter of endless difficulty to manœuvre it around.

On one occasion we stood for thirty-five minutes in an icy wind, listening to the roar of the Drin, invisible in the black gulf 500 feet below. Horses slipped and fell at every instant, and every, now and then one would go crashing into the abyss. It was a miracle that no human lives were lost.

It was ten o'clock when, tired, hungry and half frozen, we reached bivouac at Spas. Here we found

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## The March across the Mountains of Albania

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that, though dinner had been ready since four o'clock in the afternoon, it could not be served because all the plates and spoons were on the pack animals, which had remained in the village below. Neither had the tents arrived, and as Spas contains only five or six peasant houses, accommodation was at a premium. Colonel Mitrovitch, head of the mess, told us he had reserved' a room for us in a farmhouse a quarter of a mile away.

The-house really was two hours distant, over fields feet deep in snow. When we got there at midnight we discovered that there was already nearly a score of occupants ; but at least we were able to sleep in some straw near the fireside, instead of in the snow outside.

Next morning we set out at six so as to get ahead of the main body of the Headquarters Staff. The day was magnificent and we slowly climbed foot by foot to the cloud-capped summits of the mountains. Up and up we went, thousands and thousands of feet. Every few hundred yards we came on bodies of men frozen or starved to death. At one point there were four in a heap. They were convicts from Prisrend penitentiary, who had been sent in chains across the mountains. They had been shot either for insubordination or because they were unable to proceed. Two other nearly naked bodies were evidently those of Serbian soldiers murdered by Albanians.

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By midday we reached the summit of the mountain, a wind-swept plateau several thousand feet above the level of the sea. For fifty miles extended range upon range of snow-clad mountains, the crests of which had never been trodden by the foot of man. Nothing could be seen but an endless series of peaks, glittering like diamonds in the brilliant sunshine. The scene was one of undescrivable grandeur and desolation.

After traversing the plateau we began the descent, skirting the edge of precipices of enormous height and traversing narrow gorges running between towering walls of black basalt. Every few hundred yards we would come on corpses of Serbian soldiers, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups. One man had evidently gone to sleep beside a wretched fire he had been able to light. The heat of it had melted the snow, and the water had flowed over his feet. In the night during his sleep this had frozen and his feet were imprisoned in a solid block of ice. When I reached him he was still breathing. From time to time he moved feebly as if trying to free his feet from their icy covering. We were powerless to aid him, he was so far gone that nothing could have saved him. The only kindness one could have done him would have been to end his sufferings with a revolver bullet. But human life is sacred, and so there was nothing to do but pass on and leave him to breathe his last in these eternal solitudes,

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## The March across the Mountains of Albania

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On this part of the journey it was a matter of life and death. to reach the end of the *étape* and find some shelter. If we had been surprised by darkness in the desolation of these wind-swept mountain gorges, where the narrow pathway ran alongside a fathomless abyss, our fate was sealed. In addition to the forces of nature we had also to reckon with the wild and lawless Albanian population. The hardy mountaineers who live among these fastnesses have many qualities, but the life of feud and strife of their savage clans does not make for the development of respect for human life.

We spent the night in an Albanian peasant's hut in the village of Fleti, a collection of half a score of houses, surrounded, like most Albanian villages, by 'a dry stone wall. The Albanian population refused to accept our Serbian silver money, and we were forced reluctantly to bring out our small store of ten and twenty-franc gold pieces. In ordinary times one of these would represent a small fortune to the Albanian mountaineers, but they were evidently resolved to exploit the Serbian retreat commercially to the best of their ability.

We started next morning at dawn. Soon after midday we overtook King Peter and his Staff. Despite his seventy-six years he marched on foot with a vigour a younger man might have envied. During all the four hours we marched with the Royal Staff

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His Majesty never once mounted his horse, which a soldier was leading behind him. When we stopped for the night at the village Bredeti the King had a march of ten hours to his credit.

It was at this point that we came across the first gendarmes of Essad Pasha, the ruler of Albania, who eighteen months before had driven the Prince von Wied, the marionette King nominated by the Great Powers at the instigation of Germany and Austria, from his throne. These gendarmes had been sent out by their iron-handed master to protect the journey of King Peter and his Staff. They were a picturesque lot, many of them going barefooted in the snow, but there was no doubt of the first class quality of their rifles and revolvers. For the most part they wore Serbian uniforms-that is when they wore any uniform at all-of which the Nish Government had some months before made Essad Pasha a present of several thousand.

The attitude of the Albanian population towards the Serbs could not be described as friendly, but at the same time they gave no outward signs of hostility. They rarely saluted the Serbian officers and showed no desire whatever to, offer hospitality. In the case of the Members of the Serbian Government, the King and his suite and the Headquarters Staff, Essad Pasha had requisitioned accommodation in the rare Albanian villages, but anyone not belonging to one of these

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## The March across the Mountains of Albania

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units had every chance of faring badly. All they had to depend on were the "hans" or wayside caravan-serai.

These huge, barn-like structures consist of nothing but four walls with a shingle roof, the latter generally far from watertight. Here men and horses are quartered pell-mell. Everybody annexes as much space as he can and lights a fire for warmth and cooking. As the "hans" have no chimneys and the smoke is left to find its way through the open doors or through the roof, the condition of the -atmosphere may be imagined.

As du Bochet and I had pushed ahead of the Headquarters Staff, we had naturally lost the advantage of being billeted in the farmhouses requisitioned by Essad's gendarmes.

On arriving at Bredeti we had therefore to claim the hospitality of the local "han." We lit our fire in the square yard or two of space we had been able to commandeer. But the atmosphere soon proved too much for us. I do not know by what means they arrive at it, but the eyes and lungs of the Serbian soldiers seem smoke-proof. They sit and converse cheerfully in a smoke cloud through which you cannot see a yard. As we had not acquired the smoke habit, in an hour's time we were driven to flight. Blindness and suffocation seemed the penalty of a more prolonged stay.

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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We therefore, in spite of the snow and freezing cold, fled to the exterior.. Here, as some protection against the weather, we determined to put up a small tent. we carried among our baggage. It was barely three feet high and open at one end, and was, in consequence, but an indifferent shelter against the inclement weather. However, having made Stanco build a blazing fire near the open end, we entered it and went to sleep.

Three hours later we awoke to find the wretched tent in a blaze. We struggled out with **difficulty** and managed to save most of our belongings from the flames. But the tent and sleeping-rugs were gone, and there was nothing for it but to remain seated round the camp fire till the advent of the dawn would allow us to resume our weary march.

On the next *étape* a new experience awaited us. The road ran for miles through a rocky gorge, through which a river flowed. The route lay along the bed of this, and the only means to travel was to step from one stone to the other. There is nothing so **nerve-racking** as to have to keep one's eyes constantly. glued **to** the ground, where each step presents a new problem. Of course, every now and then one of the stones would turn under our feet, and this meant a plunge up to the knees in ~~the~~ icy water of -the stream.

As far as the eye could see there was nothing but this rocky bed, winding between towering 'basaltic

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## The March across the Mountains of Albania

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cliffs;. The task of transporting a thousand men and horses under such conditions was almost superhuman. If the Albanians had been openly hostile not one man could have come out alive, When we reached the village where we stopped the night we had the greatest difficulty to obtain accommodation, until it became known we were not Serbians. Then every hospitality was shown us, but prices were enormous. The Albanian, like most peasants, is grasping and fond of money; but once you cross his threshold, your person and property are sacred. I never had the slightest fear once I entered an Albanian house.

But on the road everything is possible. The tribes live at war with one another and respect for human life is nonexistent. It would have been as much as our 'lives were worth to travel an hour after darkness. But during the daylight an armed party inspires a certain respect. .

The men physically are probably the handsomest in Europe. I have never seen anywhere such beautiful children as those in Albania, and their parents seem extremely fond of them. But the little people seem to lead very serious lives. I never by any chance saw half a dozen playing together. They sat round in silence looking at us with wondering eyes, especially when du Bochet and I spoke French together. Not one Albanian in a hundred knows how to read or write, or has ever been more than twenty miles from home.



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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And it was through such a country the Serbians had to transport. an army, and that with the Germans and the Bulgarians in close pursuit.

The last stages of the march were probably the hardest, as fodder for the animals and food for the men was practically unprocurable. Money difficulties also increased daily, the Albanians refusing to accept Serbian silver or notes, at any rate of exchange, They would, however, give food and lodgings for articles of clothing, shirts, underwear, socks and boots. On the last stage we had, therefore, to resort to the primitive system of barter, buying a night's lodging with a shirt, and a meal with a pair of socks.

In the mountains just before Puka I discovered the first trace of wolves. The carcasses of dead horses, which were now numbered by scores, showed signs of having been torn by them. A part of the French Aviation Corps, which was preceding us, got lost in the snow and darkness here, and had to spend the night in the open without protection. A dozen were frost-bitten, but no fatal casualties. After six days we finally reached the Drin again, now a broad and swiftly flowing stream.

Thence the march to Scutari may be- summed up in the word mud-mud of the deepest and most tenacious kind, sometimes only reachingto the ankles, sometimes to the knees, but it -was always there.

The twenty-five miles between the Drin ferry and

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## **The March across the Mountains of Albania**

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Scutari represents physical effort of no mean order. It was the finish for scores of unfortunate pack-horses. During the last two days they got practically no food. On these days we found dead horses every hundred yards. When at last, at four in the afternoon, we came in sight of the towers and minarets of Scutari everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT SCUTARI

I DO not suppose since the Children of Israel crossed the desert any "promised land" was ever looked forward to with such yearning as that felt by the remnants of the Serbian nation for the first sight of Scutari. During the final *étape*, the "Tarabosh," the fez-shaped mountain . which dominates the town and lake, was for it what the "cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night" was for the followers of Moses. The sight of the score of minarets denoting the actual position of the town created the belief that in an hour or so our long *anabasis* would be at an end. But this was more or less an optical illusion. The flatness of the plain makes objects seem nearer than they really-are, and it was a long seven hours' tramp from our last halting-place till we reached the banks of the river on the other side of which were the outlying suburbs of the town.

Our final day's march was not the least interesting one. After climbing our last hill and winding our way down a tunnel-like descent covered with immense

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## At Scutari

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boulders, we debouched on the plain of Scutari. Here we found grassy slopes covered with clumps of spreading trees, mostly walnut and oaks. The miserable huts of the mountaineers had now given place to well-built stone houses. Instead of the poorly-clad, half-starved inhabitants of 'the hills, we now met handsome, well-clothed men and tall and graceful women. We were now in the country of the Myrdites.

We were again marching along the banks of the Drin, which is, at this point, a broad and imposing stream, pouring its meandering course towards the lake of Scutari. As far as the eye could reach there was a succession of large, closely-wooded islands, canals, lakes and flooded prairies., from which rose hundreds of poplar trees, bordered by immense banks of sand, over which we could see Serbian cavalry moving, reduced by the distance to little black dots.

In the shops in the villages we now found tobacco, excellent coffee served *à la Turque*, and little bundles of smoked fish from the lake. The slow and soft language of the Turks made a curious contrast to the harsher and more nasal Albanian. Montenegrin soldiers, with their khaki-coloured skull caps and short cloaks *à l'Italienne*, had now replaced the truculent-looking gendarmes of Essad Pasha, with their belts full of revolvers and their general look of *brigands d'opérette*. We traversed the river in large boats with

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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raised bows, reminding one of the gondolas of Venice or the caïques of Constantinople. The boatmen were tall, handsome men with swarthy, resolute faces, brilliant black eyes, drooping moustaches and aquiline noses. After the rude and rich Serbia, the monotonous deserts of Macedonia and the savage desolation of upper Albania, we had now the Orient, with its curious and attractive Eastern charm.

Our final difficulty was the fording of the river. The ferrymen refused to accept Serbian paper-money and all our silver was gone. Fortunately at this moment a Montenegrin officer of gendarmerie rode up and to him we appealed. He settled the difficulty in summary fashion by a plentiful distribution of blows from his heavy riding-whip to the men manning the boat. The latter, it appeared, had orders to transport everyone coming from Serbia free of charge, so that their effort to extort money from us was only a gentle attempt at a "hold up."

Our first visit was to the hotel where we knew the French Aviation Corps was lodged. Here we were given details of the journey of the corps, which had fared even worse than ourselves. Seventeen of their horses had died en *route*, so that the 250 officers and men composing the party had none too much in the way of food during the final *étapes*. A section of the company had also lost its way in the marshes outside Scutari, and only reached the town after tramping

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## A t S c u t a r i

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without stopping for over twenty hours; Twelve men had frost-bitten feet and had to go into hospital, but had all recovered.' At Scutari they found their six comrades who had come by aeroplane with the sick men from Prisrend. The journey by air had been accomplished in one and a half hours, the men on foot had taken nearly eight days. After indulging in the unusual-and very expensive-luxury of a whisky-and-soda we had lunch with the equally unaccustomed luxuries of table-cloths and serviettes and then went in search of quarters. These were not easy to find, as the Serbians were now pouring by thousands into the town. But du Bochet, during his previous visit to Scutari, had made the acquaintance of the Governor of Scutari, the Montenegrin Voivode Bozha Petrovitch. We paid a visit to him at his official residence and he sent a non-commissioned officer with us to requisition a lodging.

The latter found us a room in the house of a "notable" of the town, a young Turkish Albanian. It was situated in a side street. Behind an immense gateway was a large courtyard and gardens, in the centre of which stood the house, a typical Turkish edifice of the better class. We were given a large room on the ground floor. Round the whole room ran a low divan on which we could sit by day and sleep by night. The windows, Turkish fashion, were closely barred. . Every evening at eight o'clock a little

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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Turkish servant, always silent but always smiling, arrived, and after carefully removing his shoes as a sign of respect, opened an immense cupboard, from which he took mattresses, pillows and, large and handsome silk quilts embroidered with large blue and yellow flowers, with which he proceeded to make up our beds. ,

The question of sleeping quarters settled, the next question was that of food. We found the Headquarters Staff installed at the Hôtel de la Ville. As the dining-room was somewhat small for the number of officers composing the Staff, we arranged with the ever courteous but much harassed Colonel Mitrovitch to send our man Stanco to fetch our meals, which we ate at our lodgings.

This settled we went for a tour of the town. An intense animation filled the streets. Seated along the walls of the houses or cross-legged round the open windows of their small shops, or wandering about in groups, Albanians in white skull-caps and Turks with crimson fezes and heavy, brilliantly-embroidered waistbelts, looked on impassible and apparently indifferent to the invasion of their city. A continual flood of new arrivals inundated the town. There were "Komordjis" from Timok, veritable *t&es de brigands*, with their brilliant eyes, shaggy beards, and immense sheepskin bonnets ; soldiers from Old Serbia in their muddy uniforms, with rusty rifles and,

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## A t Scutari

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heavy sandals covered with caked clay ; gigantic mountaineers from the Uzhitze districts, with their deep, guttural speech and heavy step, civilians in torn and muddy clothes, women in men's dress, riding breeches, and military boots, and officers in stained and dusty uniforms.

The convoys which had struggled across the mountains were now pouring in, hundreds of Serbian oxen, with their magnificent spreading horns, but starved and lame, thin--flanked pack horses, hardly able to drag themselves along under their heavy loads, and cavalry soldiers, tramping along on foot, leading their exhausted mounts.

Every barracks was full, all the private houses had been requisitioned, and still the flood of fugitives kept pouring into the town in a double stream, one arriving by the route we had followed, from Lioum-Koula, and the other by the Montenegrin road *via* Ipek and Andreyevitza. The placid Turks, the tall and sinewy Albanians and the Myrdite mountaineers in their barbaric costumes, looked on in silence. But one felt that in them was rising a feeling of sullen rage, mixed with fear.

This invasion of Scutari had the same effect it had had everywhere else. Provisions began to run down and in a few days there was no more bread obtainable. Taken completely by surprise (for they had only a day or two's warning of the decision of the Serbians to



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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retreat into Albania) the Montenegrin Government had not had time to make preparations. Besides, what preparation could they have made ? For months past Montenegro herself had been short of provisions. Time after time the inhabitants of the capital had been forced to look on helpless, when before their very eyes, Austrian torpedo boats “ held- up ” and took off to the Bocche de Cattaro the ships laden with maize *en route* for Antivari.

Under these circumstances it may readily be imagined that the inhabitants of Scutari were far from hailing the Serbian invasion with enthusiasm. The Austrians must have got wind of this, for every morning at ten o'clock, with clock-work punctuality, an aeroplane appeared over the town and began dropping.. bombs. The first day a number of people were killed and wounded. On the other visits the casualties were fewer as everyone sought cover; but the material damage was considerable. The two points at which the bombs were aimed were the chief barracks and the Italian Consulate. These were about a hundred and fifty yards from one another. As the house I was quartered in was exactly in the centre of this line we got full advantage of all the bombs that missed. Fortunately there was a stable with thick walls and strongly-vaulted roof, which was practically bomb-proof, in which we could take refuge and from which we could watch the explosions in safety. As

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during the whole course of the war no aerial attacks had been made on Scutari the object of the new departure was undoubtedly to render the Serbians unpopular with the inhabitants of Scutari, "Jonahs" whose presence had brought misfortune on the city.

As soon 'as the Headquarters Staff arrived in Scutari it began, with admirable energy, the work of re-organizing the wrecks of the Serbian Army. It was without definite news of the various armies, for the initiative regarding the operations of the retreat into Albania had been left in the hands of the individual commanders. The first necessity, however, was to collect provisions and arrange for their distribution. Then, as the *débris* of the army arrived, the men were placed in barracks and, when these were full, in camps and bivouacs.

The guiding spirit of the Headquarters Staff was Colonel Zhivko Pavlovitch, an energetic and indefatigable Colossus, the Chief of Staff of Field-Marshal-Putnik. His influence was quickly apparent. Day by day the number of bivouacs on the hills behind Scutari became more numerous. . -With the **renaissance** of order the morale of the troops improved. The hundreds of soldiers wandering aimlessly about the streets disappeared. The division of the Danube had, by a miracle of energy, succeeded in bringing over the mountains by the Ipek route, a number of batteries

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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of field. and mountain guns. These, in the most difficult places, they had dragged along by ropes.

The troops which had marched by the Dibra—El-Bassan route in the hope of reaching Monastir and proceeding thence by rail to Salonica to join the Allies, failed to reach the former town before the Bulgarians. In forty-eight hours Colonel Zhivko Pavlovitch had succeeded in getting in touch with them and had ‘concentrated them around Kavaya, Tirana and El-Bassan. These troops were later embarked at Durazzo for Corfu.

A few hours after the entry of the Serbians into Scutari the officers of. the British Adriatic Mission arrived in the town. The object of this mission was to take measures for feeding, re-equipping and re-organizing the Serbian Army in Albania. This was also the s-desire of the Headquarters Staff. Unfortunately the Italian Government was opposed to the idea. It declared that it was not in a position to assure the safe passage of the transports with food, clothing, arms, etc., across the Adriatic.

That this was precarious was proved by the action of. the ‘Austrian fleet at Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua, when a squadron of eight vessels suddenly appeared on December 9th in those ports and sank all the shipping, steamships and sailing vessels then in the roads.

When I arrived at Durazzo some days afterwards

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## At Scutari

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M. Gavrilovitch, the Serbian Minister Plenipotentiary in that town, gave me a description of this incursion, which I cannot do better than give in his own words : “ I was sitting working in my office,” he told me, “ when one of my attaches came in and announced that a squadron of warships was in sight. I went out to the *terrasse* of the Legation whence I had a view of the Adriatic. With my field-glass I distinguished a squadron of eight ships, cruisers and destroyers, steaming toward Durazzo. When they came nearer I could distinguish the Austrian flag. As I was convinced they were going to seize that town I immediately got out the archives of the Legation, the cypher, etc., and burnt the whole in the courtyard. I fully expected to sleep that night in Ragusa as an Austrian prisoner.

“ Half an hour later the warships arrived in the roads and cast anchor. We expected to see a landing-party put off every minute. But hesitation appeared to prevail. The Austrian Admiral was probably doubtful of the forces at the disposal of Essad Pasha and the resistance he might encounter. The ships lay there inactive for two hours, and then suddenly opened fire on all the shipping in the harbour. They sank two- steamers and a number of sailing vessels. You can still see their funnels and masts emerging from the water. After that they weighed anchor and went off to San Giovanni di Medua, where they

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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repeated their exploit. They then quietly returned to the Bocche de Cattaro."

What renders this affair so mysterious is that Brindisi, where scores of Italian warships of all categories are lying, is only two and a half hours' steaming for the swiftest Italian destroyers under forced draft. I crossed from Durazzo to Brindisi a fortnight later, on the Italian destroyer the *Ardito*, and we covered the distance in about three hours with, I was told, ten knots in hand of our full speed. As the Italian Legation at Durazzo possessed a wireless station that was in constant communication with Brindisi, the Italian Admiral there must have had news of the approach of the Austrian squadron five minutes after it appeared above the line of the horizon. How, under these circumstances, it was possible for it to cruise undisturbed in the Adriatic for five hours and bombard two Albanian harbours remains a dark and fearful mystery.

On October 7th two Albanian non-commissioned officers arrived at Scutari from San Giovanni di Medua. They had arrived there from Durazzo in a motor-boat. They reported- that they had accompanied two officers, sent by Essad Pasha to escort King Peter to Durazzo. A few miles from San Giovanni di Medua they had been stopped by an Austrian submarine which had taken the officers prisoners. It allowed the two non-

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## At Scutari

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commissioned officers to continue their voyage, but told them to warn the Governor at Scutari that the whole of the entrance to San Giovanni di Medua was 'mined. This, of course, may only have been "bluff," but there was no means of making sure one way or the other.

We began to see that if we wanted to leave Albania we would have to get to Durazzo or perhaps Valona. The route by San Giovanni di Medua, though the nearest (it is only 25 miles from Scutari by an excellent road), was too uncertain to be safe. We therefore began making preparations for our journey to Durazzo. Colonel Mitrovitch kindly furnished us with three riding-horses (we had with us on this part of the journey M. Nikolitch of the Press Bureau of the Headquarters Staff, who was *en mission* to 'Salonica), a horse for our baggage and a mounted gendarme and two infantry soldiers as our escort. These, with the faithful Stanco, who led our pack-horse, made us a party of seven. As all except Stanco were armed we were in a position to defend ourselves if attacked.

M. Yovan Yovanovitch, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also kindly telegraphed to Essad Pasha, to send one of his gendarmes to meet us at Alessio (the point where the authority of the Montenegrin Government ceases) to escort us thence to Durazzo. Thanks to the courtesy of M. Pashitch,

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### **-Through the Serbian Campaign**

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the Premier, we also obtained 450 francs worth of gold, as between Scutari and Durazzo, Serbian money, silver or paper, would be useless.. Our Turkish host also gave us a letter to his uncle, who was one of the “notables” of Alessio, and who, he said, would, if we desired it, find us additional guides and escort. Under these circumstances we set out on December 12th on our journey to Durazzo, with every prospect of getting there with a minimum amount of difficulty.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SCUTARI TO DURAZZO

IT had daily become more- and more clear that there was little chance of being able to leave Albania by the port of San Giovanni di Medua. This was, I must confess, a disappointment to us, as it imposed on us a fresh march to Durazzo, and perhaps even Valona. The one would mean another week of hardships and the other at least a fortnight, as we would be forced to traverse the whole of Albania from north to south. The only consolation was that we would be able to convince ourselves *de visu* of the condition and numbers of the Serbian soldiers who had been able to take refuge in the territory ruled over by Essad Pasha.

We started for Alessio, the first *étape* on our journey, at eight o'clock on the morning of Sunday, 1 2th December. The weather was fine and mild, but a dense fog hung over the lake of Scutari and the surrounding country. The road, however, was- for Albania-an excellent one, and was being still



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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further improved by the work of about 1,500 Austrian prisoners. The influx of such a mass of Serbians made a good road to Alessio a necessity, either for the conveyance of provisions to Scutari or for the transport of the Serbian troops, if the difficulties of re-victualling them should force the authorities to evacuate them.

So good indeed was the road that we were able to trot our horses the greater part of the distance. This, of course, did not advance us much, as we had, at the end of the march, to await the arrival of our pack-horse and the two soldiers on foot, but it was less tiring than riding hour after hour at a walk. There is nothing so fatiguing as to have to crawl at a foot-pace along a road that one sees stretching before one for miles.

When we drew near Alessio, however, we had to leave the high-road, as the last mile or two was flooded, and follow a path running along the face of the hills. At first this was negotiable, but after a couple of miles or so it became so bad that it was dangerous to remain mounted as our horses slipped and stumbled on the rocky ground. As we were generally skirting declivities of considerable depth a fall would probably have been fatal. To our left were wide stretches of flooded meadows with here and there a red-roofed Albanian peasant house. Just as we were approaching a sharp angle in our

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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paths we heard a succession of shots and saw a number of -bullets strike the water round some cows which were standing knee deep in the flooded meadows. A few minutes later we saw some Albanian peasants armed with rifles come out of their huts and begin to dodge from tree to tree, always keeping under cover till they reached the water edge.

As we were moving along the hillside completely exposed to their view we felt somewhat nervous, as they might consider we belonged to the party which was firing at them, but which we could not see, as it was concealed by the bend in the path, and open fire on us. Our gendarme made' a sign to us to halt, passed the bridle of his horse to me, drew his carbine and went off to reconnoitre. He was gone about ten minutes, during which the firing continued, but evidently, from the noise of the reports, from a greater distance.- When he returned he told us that the firing had been the work of a score or so of Serbian cavalry en *route* for Alessio, and who had been emptying their carbines in sheer lightness of heart. This tendency on the part of the Serbian soldiers to fire off their rifles in this indiscriminate way was a great and ever-growing nuisance. It had begun shortly after we left Kurshoumlia and was a clear sign of relaxing discipline.

When we passed the party in question, our gendarme (who held the rank of sergeant) spoke sharply

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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to the non-commissioned officer in command, but only got an impudent reply, while his men regarded us with sullen ill-will. I imagine they had been imbibing some of 'the native raki, and that this accounted for their reckless mood. In any case, as soon as the route permitted we put spurs to our horses and got ahead of them, as we were unanimous in thinking that it was better to precede them than fall heir to any local animosities they might rouse.

It was about four o'clock in the evening when we arrived at Alessio. We had some difficulty in finding the beg or local dignitary to whom our host in Scutari had given us a letter. When we finally found him we discovered he could speak nothing but Albanian. He was a picturesque figure, as his costume was freely embroidered with gold and silver and his handsome silver-studded belt was filled with an arsenal of silver-mounted knives and revolvers. Through an interpreter he, informed us that a telegram had been received from Essad Pasha, stating that a gendarme would be given to us to act as escort. When we interviewed the latter, however, he informed us we would have to wait another thirty-six hours in Alessio till the weekly Italian mail from Scutari arrived, as he had also to escort it to Durazzo.

As we 'were unwilling to 'lose another day we deter-

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## . Scutari to. Durazzo

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mined to push on without this addition to our force. We got off the next morning at seven o'clock. The route lay over an old Turkish causeway of cobblestones as large as a child's head, worn as smooth as glass by constant floods, over which the horses sliddered as if they were on roller skates. After riding for four or five miles, during which my horse nearly fell at least twice a minute, this proved too much for my nerves, and I got down and led him. A mile further I had to mount again, as we found that a river crossed this road at right angles and that half the bridge spanning 'it was gone. The extremity of the broken half remaining was buried in the water.

My horse waded in and soon the water was right up to his withers. On reaching the broken bridge I found that it did not touch the ground in the river-bed, but was suspended about four and a half feet from the bottom. My horse had therefore to rear up, place his fore feet on the bridge and then give a spring on to the wet and slippery planks. As he could give a chamois points for sure-footedness he managed this apparently impossible feat, but came a cropper on the greasy planking, and we nearly rolled over the side again into the river. Fortunately the stump of a rotten side-post brought us up and we were able to struggle up.

After another mile or two of cobblestone causeway in ever-increasing disrepair, we got to a muddy kind

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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of jungle through which a 'vague path seemed to wind. , A heavy thunderstorm had been banking up on the horizon when we left Alessio and now it burst over us with all its fury. In a minute or two the mud had become a swamp through which we stolidly splashed our way, half blinded by the driving rain. Fortunately we came across a wayside hut in which were half a dozen truculent looking Albanians. One was in agonies of toothache, and asked me if I was a "hakim" or doctor. I had a few tablets of aspirin with me and gave him one, told him to take it and lie down till it took effect. In five minutes he was so soundly asleep that I got alarmed. I thought the dose might have a bad effect on a man who had probably never taken medicine in all his life. But when he woke up with his toothache gone a few hours later, his gratitude knew no bounds. He went out and hunted up lodgings for us in the house of a peasant friend. The latter drove a pretty stiff bargain, a gold louis for a night's lodgings, but once the commercial matter settled, treated us with patriarchal dignity as honoured guests. The walls of his house were made of wattle through which wind swept in a perfect gale on one side and out the other. It required the immense fire we had built in the centre to keep us from freezing, but the rush of air had one good point, it completely dried our soaking clothes.

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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We learnt that an hour away we would find the first of three fords over the **Mati** river, and as there were prospects that ferrying facilities might be primitive, we were off soon after sunrise next morning. The way lay through forest glades, and as brilliant sunshine prevailed, the ride was an enjoyable one. Our enjoyment came to an abrupt conclusion when we reached the ford. At this point the river is over a hundred yards broad. The ferry was a long and clumsy native boat, able to contain four horses and about twenty passengers. On the bank chaos and confusion reigned. Over three hundred people and about a hundred and fifty horses were waiting to cross. The ferry was run by a truculent Albanian aided by four rowers. On the banks a score or so of ruffianly natives were noisily shouting for "backsheesh" as the price of their assistance in embarking men and animals. They demanded ten francs in gold for each passenger and twenty francs for each horse.

. Everybody was talking at once and every journey of the boat was preceded by endless discussions. About an hour later the Italian mail arrived with at least a score of pack-horses. The "**Kavass**" of the Italian consulate, who was in charge, at once commandeered the ferry by the simple process of laying right and left with a heavy-thonged whip, tumbling out the horses already on board and expelling

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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the passengers. After his party had passed without the Kavass paying the ferryman anything but a shower of blows from his riding-whip, the former pandemonium recommenced. As we were seven passengers and five horses, there seemed little prospect of our being able to find accommodation. All day long we watched this scene of confusion, and when darkness fell the ferry ceased operations for the night.

We had therefore again to find lodgings.. At this moment a particularly ill-favoured Albanian came up and offered us sleeping room in his hut, with stabling for our horses. He made the extortionate charge of two gold louis, or forty francs. When we got to his hut (a small one) we found it already in the possession of seven Austrian prisoners. I will sleep in a hut with almost anything, but I draw the line at Austrian prisoners, who had not probably had their clothes off for a matter of six months. As they refused to leave, I declared that I would rather go and sleep in the stable where our horses had been placed. As the night was not cold we could put them out of doors without danger. This we did, and found the stables- quite as comfortable and rather more water-tight than the peasant's shut. ..

After dinner we held a council of war. It was clear that, seven passengers and, five horses was a large order for the ferry. As our riding-horses were

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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really little use to us, I proposed that we should send two of them back to Scutari under the charge of the gendarme and one of the soldiers. This would reduce our party to five, with two pack-horses. If we were at the river at dawn when the ferry started work there was every chance we could get across. At this moment we all started. A carbine had been fired just alongside the hut. I and du Bochet grabbed our revolvers and ran outside. We were just in time to find our gendarme firing a second shot from his carbine and saw the white-clad figures of a number of Albanians running off in the darkness. The gendarme had heard whistling all round the hut, and suspected this was the signal of a band of horse thieves (as it in all probability was). He watched them creeping nearer in the darkness and had then let fly at them. As they had evidently bolted we returned to the hut. Five minutes later we received the visit of three of Essad's gendarmes, who wanted to know what the reason for the firing had been. They were accompanied by our rascally landlord, who, I strongly suspect, had given his thievish neighbours the hint that we had turned out our horses in the field. I arranged that the horses should be attached and that the gendarme, the soldiers and Stanço should mount guard in turn all night. As a result all our horses were still there when we awoke next morning.



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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We gave the gendarme and the soldier their marching orders and 100 dinars as *viaticum* for their return journey to Scutari, and betook ourselves to the ferry boat. We were fortunate enough to be the first to cross, for the trifling fare of 90 francs in gold, or nearly £4. In ordinary times the charge would have been 25 centimes for each passenger and 50 centimes for each horse, or a total of 2 francs 50 centimes (2 shillings). The ferryman and his rascally assistants were making about £ 100 per. day. My only hope was that they would get their deserts when the Serbian troops began to cross. The *étape* to the next ford was uneventful, and we reached it before sundown. The first ferry had, of course, held back the crowd, so that at the two remaining ferries no time was lost, and the prices were only one franc a head for passengers and two for each horse. We passed the night in bivouac on the other bank and started next morning for the third ford. This was about the worst day's march of the whole journey. About a couple of miles from the river we entered a swampy jungle through which hundreds of paths seemed to run.' In half an hour we seemed completely lost. All we could do was to steer by the compass. On consulting the map the course seemed to be south with about two points to' the west. We took this course and began to burst our way through the jungle, splashing up to the knees

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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in mud, tearing our clothes and scratching our leggings on hundreds of thorns. The chief difficulty was with our horses. We could edge our way among the trees, but the laden pack animals had to rasp their way by main force through trees and undergrowth. The condition of our baggage after three hours of this regime may be imagined. But we were in luck as regards our direction, for when we finally struggled clear of the jungle we found ourselves barely five hundred yards from the ferry. The boat was unable to accommodate horses, so we had to unload them and swim them across and reload them on the other side, an operation which took time.

The road on the other side, though hilly, proved to be in good condition, and two hours later we were safely installed in the village of Ishmi, perched on the western slope of the mountains. Here for the first time we came in view of the sea. Forty-five kilometres away we could see the 'gleam of the Adriatic, with the white houses and graceful minarets of Durazzo nestling at the base of a high hill.

The accommodation at Ishmi was, for Albania, unusually good. The peasants with whom we lodged killed and broiled a fowl, and provided us with new-laid eggs and sour milk. Our host, a young Albanian who spoke a little Italian (he had been employed by an Italian company which owned a timber concession), offered to guide us to Durazzo by an easy

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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path over the mountains. For this we gave him a gold louis and a pair of boots.

Next morning we set out in brilliant sunshine. Though we were only a few days from Christmas, by midday it was oppressively warm-but the road was so good we could swing along the whole day at a steady four miles an hour. We slept the night at Presa, in the house of a relative of our guide, and next day completed our last *étape* to Durazzo. Three-quarters of this was along an excellent high road which runs from Tirana to Durazzo and offered no difficulties.

As we drew near Durazzo we began to see abundant signs of the presence of the remnants of the Serbian Army. On all the hills on either side of the road camps and bivouacs had been installed. On the road a constant stream of country carts were pouring empty toward the town, while an equal number filled with sacks of flour and potatoes, straw, hay, and huge pieces of freshly-killed meat were moving in the opposite direction. In addition to the carts innumerable fatigue parties, each man with an empty sack on his shoulder, were marching in the direction of Durazzo, and other parties, bending under the weight of their burdens, were returning to camp. Mounted officers were riding in all directions and groups of soldiers were running field telegraphs along the roads and across the fields to put the

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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various camps in communication with one another and with Durazzo.

The camps and bivouacs were laid out in orderly lines, trenches to run off the water had been dug, horses were picketed in symmetrical rows or turned loose to graze on the mountain side. It was clear that military order and discipline had been already re-established and progress towards reorganization had already been made. Of course many of the men still bore evident signs of the hardships they had undergone, many were seated around in the camps and bivouacs still too weak and exhausted to undertake any military duties. But these were the minority. As we came closer to the town the number of camps increased and an ever-increasing animation was everywhere visible. It was a convincing proof of the marvellous vitality of the Serbian soldier. I had the impression that in a few short weeks the army would be again a fighting machine ready to take the field.

Around Durazzo there were encamped about twenty thousand men, with probably four or five thousand horses. Many of the cavalry horses were in very poor case, but those that had survived the hardships of the march across the mountains were the animals possessing stamina and staying power, and a week or two's rest would make them fit for service. Of course there were no field guns or

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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Serbian Army service wagons. All these had been either buried or destroyed before leaving Serbian territory. But as the pursuing enemy would also be unable to bring over his field guns he would be equally handicapped. But the men were sadly in need of boots and uniforms. The long tramp over the mountains had given the coup *de grâce* to footwear that had already been tried by the long retreat. The uniforms were in rags. In many instances they were badly burnt, showing how closely their wearers had had to gather round the bivouac fires on the freezing mountain heights..

With the soldiers were the men of the new "classe," youths of eighteen and nineteen who had been called out to join the colours. These had, however, suffered terribly during the passage into Albania. Not belonging to any military unit they had no organization or commissariat. They had started out with a loaf or two of bread in their haversacks, and when this was done they had simply starved. Many were without great-coats, and had faced the mountain snow with nothing but their ordinary peasant's costume. When they arrived at Dibra, El-Bassan and Durazzo they were walking skeletons. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, succumbed to their privations. I was told that between thirty-five and forty thousand had managed to reach the bivouacs.

The great want was the insufficient number of

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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surgeons and Red Cross Units to cope with the number of sick. It would have been necessary to establish special camps for these and give them special attention and treatment, but unfortunately this was out of the question. The floods and inundations which covered the lower part of the plain behind the town and towards Valona made it difficult to find good camping grounds, and in many instances the sick and starving were unable to make the effort necessary to reach the higher grounds.

When we reached the entrance to Durazzo the soldier of our escort and Stanco had to give up their rifles, for which- they were given a receipt. By order of Essad Pasha no Serbian soldier in arms was to enter the town. In fact, no soldiers were allowed to enter it at all unless they were in possession of a regular pass proving that they had business there.

We were disappointed to see a three-masted sailing ship flying the American flag weighing her anchor just as we entered the town. Du Bochet thought that he, being Swiss and neutral, might have been able to reach Italy on board her, as the vessel, being American, would escape seizure or torpedoing by the Austrian submarines. We learnt afterwards that she would not have been a very safe ship to travel on, as she was strongly suspected of being in the pay of Austria and to be cruising in the Adriatic to spy and report to the Austrian Admiralty at Pola.

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## Through the Serbian- Campaign

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In fact, we saw her back- at her moorings next morning, and during the night we noted she used to hang out what seemed an unnecessarily large number of lanterns. As there was always an Austrian submarine cruising just outside the harbour this excited grave suspicion. She had been wandering about from one port to another-Italian, Austrian and Albanian-for two months past. As the amount of business she did did not seem sufficient to pay her working expenses, the reason for her being in these waters was not apparent. All this, as I have said, exposed her to considerable suspicions, and she was kept under very close observation. But as her papers as an American merchant vessel were all in order and she was never taken in *flagranti delicto* of espionage, nothing could be done to interfere with her movements.

The harbour presented a desolate appearance. Near the shore the funnels of two steamers sunk by the Austrians during the 'bombardment of the port on December 9th emerged from the water, while further out could be seen the tops of the masts of the sailing vessels sunk on the same occasion. Near the jetty a small steam transport was lying. She was a vessel of about 1,200 tons, and had safely made the run from Brindisi with food for the Serbian Army. She had taken over six hundred Serbian refugees eager to reach Italy on board, but could not

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## Scutari to Durazzo

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leave as an Austrian submarine was known to be cruising outside. The refugees had been on board her for over five days. The sufferings of six hundred people packed like herrings in a barrel in the ill-ventilated hold of a small tramp steamer may be imagined.

In the town we found that, as usual, famine prices prevailed, due to the influx of Serbians. We had to pay twenty francs a day for a most doubtful-looking room in a fourth-rate Albanian inn. I suppose -it would have been dear at a franc and a half in ordinary times. But though prices were high, this seemed due more to commercial speculation than to absolute dearth of provisions. There were a large number of shops run by Italians in which sausages, ham, macaroni, biscuits, fruit, wine, etc., could be procured. Such luxuries as pickles, Worcestershire sauce, chutney, Liebig's extract and Bovril were also visible in the windows.

Beer was also procurable, the first we had seen for two months. The bottles were small and the quality indifferent. But if the bottles were small it was more than could be said of the prices. We incautiously consumed three bottles without first inquiring the price,. and were somewhat staggered when we got a bill for eighteen francs. The price in Italy would have been about fourpence apiece.



## CHAPTER XV

### A T DURAZZO

ONCE installed we sallied forth to see if we could obtain any reliable information regarding the military situation and the prospects of obtaining a passage to Italy.

As regards the military situation there was little difficulty in obtaining information. The remnants of the Serbian Army were still pouring into Scutari via Montenegro and by the Albanian route via Lioum-Koula and Puka. The same held good regarding the "classe" or young men liable to military service. Over fifty thousand men, soldiers and recruits, had managed to reach the environs of Scutari. Troops of the Second and Third Armies and young recruits were still arriving at Dibra and El-Bassan, and being pushed on towards Durazzo. Round Durazzo over twenty thousand were already encamped. It was calculated that, all told, about one hundred and fifty thousand Serbians, soldiers and recruits, had escaped from the disaster at Prisrend.

But unfortunately we learned that the Bulgarians

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## A t D u r a z z o

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were in close pursuit and that Dibra would in all probability have to be evacuated. This was actually done before we left Durazzo five days later, and the troops moved on to El-Bassan. The Combined Divisions and some other units were still to be counted on as a military force, and were delaying the Bulgarian advance. I received sad news of the convoy of the Combined Division with which we had travelled to Pristina. It had been attacked in the mountains by an Albanian clan and most of the "Komordjis" massacred. Among the victims were the major and his wife from whom I had had hospitality, as well as the veterinary surgeon attached to the column and his little fifteen-year-old son.

The advance of the -Austrian and Bulgarian forces was beginning to arouse considerable anxiety, as it would still further complicate the already difficult problem of the re-victualling of the Serbian Army. Unless food was promptly forthcoming it would be impossible to count on any help from the Serbian Army in resisting or delaying the advance of the enemy. Two solutions were put forward. One proposal was that the Serbian Army should be withdrawn from Albania and conveyed to some other centre to be re-equipped and reorganized. The other proposal was that it should remain in Albania and be reorganized there. But for this it would be necessary to guarantee that the Adriatic should be

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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efficiently policed, and this Italy seemed unwilling to undertake. It was also the desire of the Headquarters Staff that the Serbian Army should not quit Albania.

The Serbian Army is a peasant one and has little comprehension of the problems of tactics and strategy and still less for those of international politics. As long as it was in Albania it saw the line of blue mountains on the horizon and knew that Serbia lay on the other side. But if conveyed to foreign countries it would feel *dépaysé*, torn up by the roots. Not one Serbian soldier had ever seen the sea and if transported across it for hundreds of miles he would feel himself lost. It is possible to explain to a British or French soldier that when he is fighting in France, in Egypt, in Gallipoli or in Mesopotamia he is still fighting for his country and defending its cause. But such arguments would be lost on the Serbian soldier, they are beyond his primitive mentality. But of course everything depended on the maintenance of supplies, and for this it was necessary to clear the Adriatic of hostile war vessels, notably submarines. It would further be necessary to largely reinforce the Italian troops at Valona and send strong detachments to central and northern Albania to oppose the advance of the Austrian and Bulgarian Armies. It was specially necessary to check the advance of the latter from Dibra and El-Bassan.

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It was evident that if the Bulgarians should reach Durazzo the fate of the forty or fifty thousand Serbians, including the Headquarters Staff, at Scutari would be sealed, as they would be completely isolated and shut in between the Austrian and Bulgarian Armies. During my stay in Durazzo the Austrian submarine was continually *en évidence*. She even engaged in an artillery duel with the small transport in the harbour, which was armed with a couple of small guns.

The following day when I called on Essad Pasha I found him anxious but far from depressed. He had that day formally declared war on Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria and had the Consuls of these countries arrested, and had placed them on board the American three-master to which I have made reference above. He told me the Allies could count on him to the death. It was certain that after his expulsion of the Prince of Wied, the puppet King imposed on Albania by the Central Powers, that the latter would show him no mercy. Of the ultimate victory of the Allies he had no doubt, though in common with everyone else he deplored the errors of their policy in the Balkans. He frankly admitted the critical nature of the situation created by the presence of the Austrian and Bulgarian troops in Albania. He himself, beyond his 6,000 gendarmes, did not dispose of any organized troops. It was clear that if Italy could not guarantee the safety of the transports of the Allies in the

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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Adriatic, nothing remained but to evacuate the Serbian Army, and even do it promptly.

On leaving Essad Pasha I went to call on Baron Allioti, the Italian Minister in Durazzo, at the Legation-the handsomest and most imposing building in the town. It is flanked on one side by the Consulate and the Italian hospital, and on the other by the wireless station, by which the Minister is in telegraphic communication with Brindisi. He informed me that Italian torpedo boats were coming over to escort, the transport in the harbour to Brindisi, and promised that du Bochet and myself would be given means of reaching Italy.

On leaving the Legation I met the Italian battalion, which had just arrived, marching through the streets. They seemed a fine, sturdy body of men, in their workmanlike grey service uniforms. There were two more battalions in a village two hours' distance from Durazzo and others echeloned along the route from Valona. The road, however, was in bad condition owing to floods. The battalion in Durazzo had been eight days on the march from Valona. I was extremely glad that the promise given us by Baron Allioti made it unnecessary for us to undertake the march to Valona. After the experience we had undergone in the retreat from Prisrend and our journey from Scutari, we had no desire to negotiate another hundred miles of swamp and mountains in Albania.

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The following morning we received instructions to present ourselves at nine o'clock in the evening to Lieutenant Musellardi, of the Italian Navy, who was acting as captain of the port. We expected that at that hour we would go on board the transport lying in the bay. But when we reached the jetty we were informed that we would cross on the Italian destroyer which was coming to escort the transport to Brindisi. By this time a score or so of persons had assembled on the jetty who were to be our fellow travellers. These included Prince and Princess Alexis Karageorgevitch and their suite and a number of Serbian staff officers. Two Albanian sailing-boats with huge lug sails, such as one generally sees during the coasting trade on the Albanian coast, were rocking alongside the quay to convey us to the destroyer as soon as she should appear. But hour after hour passed. It was nearly midnight when two quick flashes in the Egyptian darkness of the horizon announced the arrival of the destroyer.

The baggage was hastily loaded on the boats, which at once pushed off and made in the direction the flashes had been seen.. But it is one thing to go in search of a small vessel like a destroyer at night in an open bay and another thing to, find her. For over an hour we cruised backwards and forwards in the black darkness. A heavy sea made the boat roll-heavily, so much so that some of the passengers began to pay their tribute to Neptune. Then' the destroyer risked yet another

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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flash from her searchlight and we could at last locate her.

Once alongside the passengers and luggage were transferred with all speed to the destroyer, which turned out to be the *Ardito*, a thirty-six knot boat, one of the swiftest in the Italian Navy. Three more destroyers and a couple of French cruisers were, we were told, lying outside the bay. The period of waiting till the transport with the 600 Serbian refugees got up her anchor and got under way was the most anxious moment. Every instant we expected to see a torpedo launched from the Austrian submarine, which we knew, from optical proof, was cruising outside.

But nothing happened, and the *Ardito*, with her clumsy *protégé* (whose fastest pace was about seven knots) slowly but surely crawled out of the roads. Half an hour later we rejoined the other destroyers outside and confided to them the task of escorting the transport. As soon as the transfer was effected the *Ardito* suddenly put on speed and began to walk through the water at twenty-six knots an hour. Everybody on board heaved a sigh of relief, as a ship travelling like an express train furnishes an almost impossible target for a submarine. Two and a half hours later we entered Brindisi harbour. There for miles on either hand lay scores of Dreadnoughts, battleships, battle cruisers, armoured and protected

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## At Durazzo

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cruisers, destroyers, torpedo boats and submarines, all with steam up night and day. This display of Italy's naval strength only deepened the mystery of her apparent inaction in presence of the Austrian submarines and cruisers. With steam coal at over a hundred francs a ton it must have cost a small fortune to keep this magnificent fleet under steam pressure night and day. This only increased the surprise felt by the uninitiated at the apparent inaction of the Italian fleet.

Just as a grey and cheerless dawn was beginning to appear I set foot on Italian soil, which I had quitted nearly four months before. But in these four short months much history had been made, and one of the bravest, if one of the smallest, nations of Europe had, for the moment at least, ceased to exist.



## CHAPTER XVI

### ITALY, SERBIA AND THE ALBANIAN QUESTION

IT is a curious point that the eternal "Albanian question" has survived all others in the Balkans, and exercised a considerable influence on the fate of the Serbian Army.

This is the more curious as the "Albanian question" per se does not exist. It is entirely an artificial product and will cease to exist when the present war reaches a conclusion. For nearly a century past Albania and the Albanians have been a thorn in the side of the Great Powers, and the cause of endless friction between them. The last instance of this has been the attitude of Italy toward the Serbian Army and her evident desire to see it anywhere except on Albanian soil. It has been clear that, from the beginning, the Rome Government viewed with a jealous eye the presence of King Peter's troops at Scutari, Durazzo and other Albanian centres.

In order to understand the full bearing of the Albanian problem on the present situation we must examine the causes which first gave it birth. Its

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## Italy, Serbia and the Albanian Question

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primary cause is racial. The Albanians claim to be, and are beyond all doubt, a distinct race. Their geographical position, their language and customs fully justify their claim to be a separate nation. But this need not necessarily be the cause of endless international complications ; Albania could be left to “stew in her own juice ” and work out her own salvation were it not for the appetites and ambitions of other Powers, who covet, for political reasons, a predominant influence on her territory. The Albanian question, is, I repeat, a purely artificial one. It is the outcome of the rivalry of Italy and Austria-Hungary for predominance in the Adriatic. The instant one or other of these Powers becomes master of that sea, the Albanian question ceases to exist.

Italy desires that the Adriatic shall become an Italian lake in which the Italian flag shall fly supreme ; Austria-Hungary desires to prevent the realization of this ambition. The result of the struggle has been to call into being the Albanian question. Up to 1913 Albania had been governed, or rather mis-governed, by the Turks. It has been clear for half a century past. that the break-up of the Turkish Empire in Europe- was inevitable. When this occurred' Albania- would either break away and form an independent kingdom, or would fall under the domination of one of her neighbours, Austria-Hungary, Italy, or Serbia and Montenegro.

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Each of these countries therefore began, in preparation for the *débâcle* of the Turkish Empire in Europe, to secure a footing in Albania, and with a view to this began a propaganda in that country. In Albania there are three militant parties, each with a separate political aim. There are the Catholic Albanians, who desire to see the predominance of Austria-Hungary, the more moderate Mohammedan section which desires the triumph of Italian influence, and the fanatical Mohammedan section, which wants neither but would like to see the return of Turkish rule. The latter is the least influential, but is at the same time, like all extremists, the most fanatical. and *intransigent*.

The result is that for half a century past the country has been given over to the intrigues of the rival nations. The priests of the Catholic section have been nothing less than the paid agents of the Dual Monarchy, while the moderate Mohammedan section has been subventioned by Italy. The pro-Turkish section, the least influential and the most irreconcilable, is animated chiefly by religious zeal, and therefore increases the confusion caused by the intrigues of the other two parties. There is only one point on which all three meet on common ground, and that is their opposition to Serbian aspirations.

For centuries past Serbia has suffered from her

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## Italy, Serbia and the Albanian Question

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land-locked geographical position. She has on every side been cut off from access to the sea. Her commerce had to pass over foreign territory in order to reach the outside markets, and each of her neighbours tried to secure a dominating position. It took hundreds of years' struggle for Serbia to finally shake off the Turkish yoke and liberate herself from the influence of the Ottoman Empire. The fashion in which she resisted the efforts of Austria-Hungary to reduce her to the status of a vassal state was one of the contributing factors of the present war.

The last attempt made by the Powers to settle the Albanian question, by giving the country independence, was as great a failure as all previous ones. The Prince von Wied, an Austro-German nominee, was elected King by the Great Powers. But as he was the nominee of the Central Powers the partisans of Italian influence at once began to agitate against him. He was forced to quit Albania. Then, as often happens on such occasions, the see-saw of politics having established a momentary equilibrium, a third factor came on the scene in the person of **Essad Pasha**, an ex-general in the service of the Sultan and an Albanian by birth. By invoking national, as opposed to international, aspirations he succeeded in establishing himself in Durazzo as ruler of central Albania.

The momentary wane of Austrian influence gave

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Montenegro its opportunity and it again seized the fertile plain of Scutari from which it had been expelled by the Great Powers, after the war against Turkey. This excited deep distrust in Italy, which saw in the action a cause for further complications. This distrust was further deepened by the arrival in Albania of the remnants of the Serbian Army. If this army and its Montenegrin ally had settled down in Albania, Italy might have found that Serbian influence and ambitions had simply replaced Austrian ones and that the situation was as complicated as ever.

What will be the settlement of this apparently insoluble problem, one naturally asks ? The answer is that the disappearance of the Albanian question will be one of the results of the present war. In the great struggle now going on it is a fight to a finish, either Italy or Austria will come out victor, and as Austria has thrown in her lot with Germany there can be no doubt of the ultimate issue. When the final victory of the Allies has been achieved Italy will obtain the territories known as "Italia irredenta," the "unredeemed" Italian-speaking provinces of Trentino, Tirol and Western Istria. Austria-Hungary will cease to exist on the Adriatic, and that day the Albanian question also disappears. The day Italy no longer fears that another Power may obtain predominance in Albania, that country will become

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## Italy, Serbia and the Albanian Question

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indifferent to her, at least politically. The Albanians will then be left to work out their own salvation. With the possession of Trieste and Pola in the north and Valoria, the Gibraltar of the Adriatic, in the south that sea will become an Italian lake. Albania can never become a naval power. Her desolate mountains; do not excite the land greed of any nation. Once her political status is settled and she is no longer a shuttlecock for her powerful neighbours to knock about, her economic development may be undertaken. If some millions of pounds were spent on draining the plain of Durazzo it would give a magnificent return for the money invested. The fertile plain of Scutari could also be opened up by increasing the facilities for navigation between the lake of Scutari and the sea.

There will, of course, remain Serbia's legitimate claim for access to the sea, but as the Quadruple Alliance will undoubtedly meet this in a friendly spirit it should not pass the wit of man to arrive at an agreement. The presence of Serbia on the Adriatic could not, in the slightest degree, menace Italy's position as a naval Power. It should therefore be possible to give her a commercial harbour on the Adriatic, with a hinterland running back to the Serbian frontier through which she could pass her produce without let or hindrance.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE EVACUATION OF ALBANIA BY THE SERBIAN ARMY

AFTER my arrival in Italy I had an opportunity of discussing the position of the Serbian Army in Albania with a number of diplomatists and military men. I found opinions much divided. The British and French were in favour of the Serbian Army being revictualled, re-equipped and reorganized on Albanian soil. The British Adriatic Commission had already sent missions of officers to Scutari, San Giovanni di Medua and Brindisi. The Commission was under the command of Brigadier-General Taylor, who had his headquarters at Rome.

But the first condition for the successful achievement of the object of the Commission was the certainty that the transports containing food, arms, clothing, etc., should be able to reach their destination in safety. For this it would be necessary to assure them against attack by Austrian submarines. This was the task of the Italian navy. But the Admiral commanding at Brindisi was of opinion that it offered insuperable difficulties. The Albanian

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## The Evacuation of Albania by the Serbian Army

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coast has no harbours. Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua are open roadsteads. It is only possible to land goods in favourable weather. Only small vessels can be employed, as large ones cannot approach the coast. This naturally increases the number of the transports, and the difficulty of escorting and protecting them would overtax the powers of the Aeet in Brindisi.

The Italian staff was also of opinion that the Serbians were not in a position to resist the simultaneous invasion of Albania by the Austro-German and Bulgarian Armies. This would have entailed the necessity for Italy of reinforcing her garrison at Valona and occupying other strategic points in Albania. This Italy was unwilling to do, as the difficulty of feeding and maintaining a large army there is too great. In addition the Italian troops might have found themselves face to face with German troops. Italy, however, has not declared war on Germany and is anxious to avoid possible points of contact with that Power.

While these discussions were going on between the three Governments events were moving rapidly. The Bulgarians advanced from Dibra to El-Bassan and threatened Durazzo, while the Austrians captured Mount Lovtchen and made themselves -practically- masters of Montenegro and threatened Scutari.



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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The position of the Serbian Army became critical in the extreme. There were over fifty thousand men in and round Scutari. If the Bulgarian Army at El-Bassan should reach Durazzo it would cut Albania, in two halves and would leave the Serbian forces at Scutari no port of embarkation except San Giovanni di Medua. The problem of embarking such a force from a small open roadstead seemed insoluble. As the members of the Government and the Headquarters Staff were still at Scutari the capture of the troops there would have been an absolute disaster. As it was the task of transporting them to Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua bristled with difficulties of every kind.

The next question to be settled, in case the evacuation was decided on, was the destination of the Serbian troops. Various places were suggested, Corsica, Tunis, Algeria, etc., but the spot finally selected was Corfu. The island, it is true, was Greek, and the Powers did not dispose of it as their property. But it was difficult for Greece to refuse hospitality to the Serbians as Serbia was an allied state. There had been a difference of opinion between the Serbian and the Greek Governments as to the obligations imposed on them by the Greco-Serbian Treaty of 1913. Serbia argued that by it Greece was bound to come to her aid if she was attacked by Bulgaria ; the Athens Government took

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## **The Evacuation of Albania by the Serbian Army**

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the view that it only became operative if Bulgaria alone attacked Serbia, but did not force Greece to come to the aid of Serbia if other Powers took part in the attack. But the treaty had not been denounced by either party, there was only a difference of opinion as to its interpretation. Greece and Serbia were therefore still technically allies, so that it was difficult for the former to refuse hospitality to the army of King Peter.

The island of Corfu offered many advantages. It was only a few hours' steaming from the Albanian coast. The risks of a long voyage for a large fleet of transports were therefore got rid of, and the evacuation could be carried out rapidly, as the same vessels could go backwards and forwards between the Albanian ports and the island. Climatically Corfu left nothing to be desired, as the temperature is much the same as that of Serbia. It might have been a risky matter transporting a mountain people to the warm climate of Algeria or Tunis.

Then the future operations of the Serbian troops had to be kept in view. It was clear that as soon as the army was rested, reorganized and re-equipped, it would again take the field. There were only two possible fields of action, Albania or Salonica. Under those circumstances it was desirable to keep the Serbian Army as near its future theatre of operations as possible. If the distance to be covered was small

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a small fleet of transports would suffice, as the same vessels could go backwards and forwards in a few hours. If the army had to be brought from Algeria or Tunis, a large fleet of transports would be necessary, and this would increase the cost, the loss of time and the risk of attack from submarines.

As soon, therefore, as it was decided to transport the Serbian Army to Corfu no time was lost in carrying out the operation. A large fleet of transports at once took the work-in hand. An Italian force was sent to Durazzo to protect that town against attack, while the embarkation was going on. -A part of the Serbian Army at Durazzo descended the coast to Valona. The' embarkation was made from three ports, San Giovanni di Medua, Durazzo and Valona. Not only were the troops transported, but several thousand horses were brought away safely.

British, French and Italian vessels took part in conveying the troops, while the warships. of the three Powers policed the Adriatic with such success that the Austrian submarines were kept at a respectful distance. But it became clear that Essad Pasha and his troops would also have to leave Albania, as the Bulgarians and Austrians were now converging on Durazzo from all sides. After the Italian troops had successfully covered the embarkation at Durazzo they had themselves to beat a retreat to Valona.

All these difficult and delicate operations were

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## The Evacuation of Albania by the Serbian Army

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successfully carried out, and though the Austrians and Bulgarians became masters of all Albania, they failed in their principal object, the surrounding and capture of the Serbian Army. A part of their forces advanced as far as Valona, but that town had little difficulty in defending itself. The invading force was unable to bring any artillery, beyond mountain and machine guns, across the mountains, so that it could not undertake an attack on a town defended by heavy Italian batteries brought by sea from Italy.

The Italians need not have any anxiety regarding the Austrian and Bulgarian occupation of Albania, as this will come automatically to an end as soon as the expeditionary force at Salonica successfully invades Bulgaria. That day the Bulgarians will be forced to evacuate Albania, and even do it hurriedly, if they do not want to find themselves cut off from all return, to Bulgaria.

The day this happens the Austrians must also evacuate the country, as they would have lines of communication to guard running from Bosnia to Valona, through a territory which has no railways and few roads. Fifty per cent. of the population is absolutely hostile to them. Even the Catholic part of Albania is only pro-Austrian 'as long as the Dual Monarchy subsidizes it, and would under no circumstances take up arms in defence of Austrian interest & against a foreign foe.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SERBIAN ARMY AT CORFU

ONCE it had been decided to transfer the Serbian Army to Corfu, preparations had to be made with all haste to receive it. It was no small matter to convey over a hundred thousand soldiers, with all that remained of their horses, mountain guns, machine guns and impedimenta of all descriptions, in a country denuded of good roads, to three open roadsteads, and then embark them on transports. It must be remembered that this had to be done under the constant menace of attack by the Austrian Army in Montenegro and the Bulgarian troops at El-Bassan.

But not only was it necessary to embark them in Albania, preparations had to be made for receiving them at Corfu. Corfu is an island of 100,000 inhabitants, and possesses only such resources as are required for their daily necessities. It is needless to say that it was out of the question to call upon the authorities or the population to provide even a tenth of the provisions necessary for the maintenance

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## The Serbian Army at Corfu

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of the Serbian Army. It would have been a poor exchange to save them from starvation in Albania to allow them to die of hunger in Corfu.

The solution of the problem was left in the hands of the French Commanders, General de Mondesir and Admiral de Gueydon, and the French Minister, M. Boissonnais. Two bases were organized, a maritime base and a land base. The task of the former was to bring the Serbian troops on shore as fast as the transports arrived, and also to land the enormous mass of provisions and merchandise of all kinds sent from France and England. The harbour of Corfu presented a sight such as had never been seen in its history.

Scores of transports with the troops arrived daily and tramp steamers of every sort and size crowded the roads. The first great difficulty was, the want of boats of all kinds, for landing men and goods. Those that the port possessed in ordinary times were, of course, totally insufficient. But the sailor has the reputation of being the “handy man” able to make use of the most unpromising material. The French *Man-o’-War’s* man is little behind his British comrade in this respect. Admiral de Gueydon’s men showed themselves full of resource and ingenuity. Everything that would float was pressed into service, ships’ boats, barges, fishing vessels, skiffs, and even rafts. So well did they work that they were soon

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able to disembark 20,000 men a day with 1,200 tons of provisions.

The *tours de force* realized by the maritime base inspired the land base with healthy emulation. In fact, all through this difficult period the military, naval and civil authorities worked hand in hand for the common aim, the prompt succour of the Serbian Army. Red tape was reduced to a minimum. General de Mondesir, Admiral de Gueydon and M. Boissonnais held a daily conference. This daily exchange of views suppressed all necessity for reports, letters, and useless correspondence which would have only delayed and complicated the work on hand.

The first duty of the land base was to assure a supply of bread. There was no want of flour, as large cargoes had been sent from France. But it was not sufficient to have flour, it was also necessary to find a means of baking it. The first difficulty was to find wood to heat the ovens. Corfu is rich in olive and orange trees, but it is not with such wood that fires can be made. As a first step the land base requisitioned all the available private ovens. Then a couple of companies of engineers set to work to construct field bakeries. Ships were sent off to Epirus to purchase wood from the Greeks. But until their return and until all the baking organization was completed, bread rations had to be distributed with a certain parsimony.

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## The Serbian Army at Corfu.

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In a day or two's time, however, all difficulties were overcome, and two field bakeries of 32 ovens each, employing 490 men, were at work night and day. Each oven furnished 120 three-pound loaves every two hours, or 240 rations, as each soldier received a pound and a half of bread each day. The 64 ovens therefore furnished more than sufficient to feed the whole Serbian Army, and the refugees who had accompanied it.

At first some difficulty was experienced with the meat. The authorities distributed, with laudable prodigality, large quantities of Australian frozen meat to the starving troops. But the Serbian soldier, had never seen frozen meat in his life, and as the authorities omitted to give them directions for unfreezing it, he simply threw it into boiling water and proceeded to cook it. When the meat was taken out it was found to resemble a section of a pneumatic tyre, and proved just about as digestible. This "caused not a little perturbation in the camps, till it was explained to the men that frozen meat **must** first gradually thaw and return to its normal condition before any attempt is made to cook it.

Of course the organization of the various camps was not an affair of hours or even days. The weather at first was most unfavourable, to an extent that caused great doubt as to the wisdom of choosing Corfu as a reorganization base.- During the first



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few weeks it rained with a persistence and a force that might have rendered a seal anxious. The unfortunate Serbs had no tents, and such huts as they were able to construct were a poor protection against the torrential downpour. If it was not raining it was hailing.

The result was that the various camps became seas of mud, while the roads began to give way under the excessive strain imposed upon them by the mass of traffic between the camps and the port. All this imposed fresh work on the officers and men conducting the various operations and assuring the provisioning and equipping of the troops. It also hampered considerably the training of the recruits.

The Serbian soldiers, too, were badly clothed to meet such inclement weather. Their uniforms were in rags and their footwear for the most part in a lamentable condition. There were large numbers of new uniforms and boots sent from France and England, but it was not possible to begin the distribution till the men were organized into regular military units, sections, companies, battalions and regiments.

The new uniforms for the Serbian Army were sent from France and England, while the new footwear had been purchased in the United States. As soon as the army had received its new equipment, the various units were at once formed, and the re-

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## The Serbian Army at Corfu

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organization of the mass of men as a fighting machine was begun.

Of course the length of time required for the reconstitution of the units was not great in the case of -men who had already served, and possessed a military instruction. But with the army were thousands of young men of the new “ classe ” who were totally, untrained. These, after they were reposed from the hardships they had undergone during the retreat, had to be clothed, armed and instructed. The army was further without artillery or means of transport, as all guns and wheeled vehicles had had to be destroyed before it left Serbian soil. All that it possessed were the officers’ chargers and several thousand cavalry and pack-horses that had served to carry provisions during the retreat across the mountains. There were also a number of mountain batteries and machine gun sections with their mules.

It speaks well for the quality of the Serbian soldier that by the month of April certain units were again thoroughly reconstituted and were sent off to Salonica to take their place in the fighting&c.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SERBIA AFTER THE AUSTRO-GERMAN OCCUPATION

“**W**HAT is the condition of Serbia since the Austro-German occupation ? ” is a question one often hears. It is somewhat difficult to answer, as reliable information is not easy to obtain. While the war in Serbia continued, it was possible to receive fairly accurate reports as to the doings and. conduct of the invaders, as it was impossible for the most vigilant provost-marshal on the enemy side to prevent peasants reaching the Serbian lines with reports.

But since the occupation of Serbia, the problem of obtaining accurate information has become more complicated. The fact that the invaders are also in possession of the adjoining states of Montenegro and Albania precludes information filtering through these channels. In fact, the narrow strip of Greek frontier is the only point at which Serbia is in touch with the outside world.

This is what made the position of the Serbs such a terrible one. The unfortunate population had no haven of refuge whatever. Their lot is even

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## Serbia after the Austro-German Occupation,

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worse than that of the Belgians. The latter could flee into Holland, France and Great Britain, where they were sure of a friendly and affectionate welcome. But the Serbs had no such asylum. They had to “dree their weird,” and are completely at the mercy of their enemies.

The Serbian Government has, however, managed to open up sundry secret channels of information, and has obtained something like an accurate picture of the condition of the unhappy country. M. Yovan Yovanovitch, the Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, communicated to me the information obtained by his Government. It does not make cheerful reading.

At first when the Austro-German forces entered the country they were, as I stated in a former chapter, on their good behaviour. The Serbian wounded were well cared for and the requisitions made on the inhabitants were not too severe, and were generally paid for. The invaders even supplied the population with sugar and salt at prices far below those current in Serbia. But this was merely policy. While the Serbian Army still held the field, a reputation for humane treatment of the conquered provinces was likely to facilitate the task of the invaders. The population in the provinces still held by the Serbian Army were less likely to flee, carrying off all their stores of food.

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But once they were masters of the whole country, the attitude of the invaders immediately changed. The unfortunate population was dragooned without mercy, ruthless martial law was proclaimed from one end of the country to the other. And then the work of spoliation began. All food was seized and sent off to Germany. All the corn, grain, pigs, sheep, cattle, horses, fowls, firewood, in a word-everything that could be of any use in Germany was ruthlessly confiscated.

After the food came the metals. Every scrap of metal that could be found was seized, particularly copper. Even the door-handles and cooking utensils were confiscated. Fortunately for the Allies the Germans were unable to exploit the famous copper mine at Bor, one of the most productive in Europe. Before abandoning it the Serbians wrecked it to such a degree that experts brought from Germany to inspect it, reported that twelve months' hard work was required on it before a single ounce of copper could be extracted.

As can be imagined, the condition of the Serbian population was a terrible one. The whole trade and commerce of the country was at a standstill, as it was completely cut off from all communication with the outer world. No letters or telegrams were allowed to be sent and the railways were reserved exclusively for the use of the Austro-German Armies.

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## Serbia after the Austro-German Occupation

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The position of the public functionaries, civil servants, schoolmasters and all who looked to the Government for their incomes was a terrible one. They had no means of drawing their salaries; as naturally the Serbian Government at Corfu could not entrust the paying of these to the Germans. It was even questionable if the Germans would not confiscate this money if it had reached Serbia through some neutral country. In the case of Belgium the population was kept alive by relief administered by an American Committee. But no such organization existed in Serbia, and it is more than doubtful if, in view of the strained nature of the relations between Berlin and Washington, the Germans would have consented to allow an American relief organization to be established in Serbia.

The Allies too had their misgivings. They were of opinion that the 'feeding of the Serbian population by neutrals or by the Allies themselves' would be only an indirect means of contributing to the reprovioning of Germany, as it would relieve that country of all obligation to aid the Serbians. But this view M. Yovanovitch assures me was a mistake. No such humane ideas would trouble the Germans. They were utterly indifferent as to whether the Serbs lived or died, and the spectacle of a whole nation perishing of hunger would not move them in the least.

As a result Serbia starved. Even in such centres

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as Belgrade, a few hundred yards from Austria, famine prevailed. And with hunger came disease. This last trial, added to the fatigue and privations of four years of ceaseless war, was too much for the strength of thousands of the population. Tuberculosis made its appearance everywhere; and people began to die of it by hundreds. In Belgrade in the month of April there was hardly a house in which someone was not suffering from it.

And as all the sanitary aid formerly so generously furnished by the Allies and by neutral countries was now wanting, the people were helpless. Such medical aid as the Germans possessed they needed for their own troops and had none to spare for the Serbians. It really looked as if the invaders had deliberately resolved to stamp the Serbian nation out of existence, by war, hunger and disease.

It was to the Austrians that Serbia in **1915** owed the introduction of typhus which swept off tens of thousands of the population. It is to the Germans that they owe the outbreak of tuberculosis which threatens the very existence of the race.

Meantime the Germans behaved as if the country was definitely conquered, and annexed. A town near Belgrade was baptized Mackensenburg in honour of the victorious field-marshal. Two German Governmental newspapers were founded in Belgrade, one in German -and the other'- in Serbian, and the whole

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## Serbia after the Austro-German Occupation

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country cut up into administrative districts with German, Austrian or Bulgarian officials at their head.

. It is, however, characteristic that the Austrians profited but little by their victory. All the food, horses, metal, etc., requisitioned were forwarded to Germany or used by the German forces, while their Austrian Allies had little or no share in the distribution. The fact that the relations between the Germans and their Austrian allies are far from cordial is beyond all doubt. Reports I have received from Red Cross Units who passed some weeks as prisoners in various parts of Serbia were unanimous on this point. The Germans, especially the Prussians, treat the Austrian soldiers with arrogance and the latter respond by hearty dislike.

This, however, does not profit the Allies much. As the Dual Monarchy has been, since the beginning of the war, the catspaw of its more powerful neighbour, it cannot now assert itself, and has to dance as Germany pipes. The Germans know this, and do not think it necessary to treat their Ally with kid gloves. As long as Austria desires to carry on the war she is bound to remain with Germany, whether she is well treated by her or not. The only danger the Germans run is that if they carried things too far, Austria-Hungary might prefer to “chuck up the sponge” rather than submit to further German exactions. Unfortunately the Vienna Government is too deeply engaged to risk



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this, and will probably have, *nolens volens*, to stick to their exacting Ally to the last.

Dr. Elsie Inglis, who remained behind with the Serbian wounded at Krushevatz, and whom I have since seen in London after her release from captivity, informed me that she and her nurses repeatedly noticed how arrogantly the Germans treated their Austrian comrades, and how little love the latter had for them. This sentiment even contributed to the well-being of the Scottish women, as it caused the Austrians to protect them from contact with the Germans, who made no secret of- their detestation of everything British.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SERBIAN RELIEF MOVEMENT DURING THE CAMPAIGN

THE one oasis in the desert of the shortcoming of the Allies *vis-à-vis* Serbia, is the great and generous contribution of the British public for the relief of distress in King Peter's kingdom. The noble fashion in which Britons of every class and condition responded to the appeal for their help, is worthy of the great traditions of the Empire.

The Serbian Relief Fund was constituted on September 23rd, 1914. Within a few days a banking account with £2,000 or £3,000 was opened, and within a month it had sent out its first unit, generally spoken of as Lady Paget's Hospital. At that time, of course, the fighting was very severe at the Front, and nearly all the cases were surgical. From November, 1914, this unit worked in Uskub in the face of difficulties and even hardships. Lady Paget herself contracted typhus. Some weeks later a Second Hospital Unit, organized and equipped on the initiative of Cornelia Lady Wimborne, was sent out. A Third

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Unit, organized by the Women's Emergency Corps, under Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, left at the end of March, **1915**.

The Fourth and Fifth Units sent out belonged to the British Farmers' organizations. The first of these was established at Belgrade, the second at Pozharevatz.

In addition it sent nurses and stores at a cost of several thousand pounds to Mrs. Hankin Hardy's Hospital at Kraguyevatz. It contributed to the Anglo-Serbian Hospital. organized under Dr. and Mrs. Berry, to the Archbishop -of Belgrade's Fund for the refugees, and to the relief work organized by the Society of Serbian Sisters. It also forwarded many thousands of pounds' worth of material to the Serbian Red Cross, and has received and forwarded to Serbia very large quantities of gifts in kind (e.g., 217,000 bandages, 15, 000 lbs. surgical dressings, 2,400 lbs. invalid foods, 56,000 shirts, 6,200 pyjamas, 29,000 p'airs of socks, etc., etc.).

Some idea of the sum of the effort made by the Serbian Relief Fund. may be gathered when we consider the condition of things that existed when Lady Paget's Red Cross Unit reached Serbia. This arrived at Uskub on November 17th, and was offered by the Serbian authorities the choice. of three hospitals ; the first .was the. First Reserve Hospital of about one thousand beds, which was being administered by Madame Popovitch, the wife of the General com-

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## **The Serbian Relief Movement during the Campaign**

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manding Southern Serbia ; but Lady Paget naturally did not like to displace her. The second was a hospital of 1,200 beds situated in three tobacco warehouses, each containing three floors, accommodating one hundred to two hundred beds on each floor, with very insufficient light and ventilation and practically no sanitary arrangements. It was considered that these buildings were quite unsuitable for a good surgical hospital. This hospital was taken over by the British Red Cross Unit which arrived a few days later. The Unit finally selected a third series of buildings which formed a Serbian gymnasium and had been transformed into a hospital of 330 beds by the Serbians.

The buildings consisted of a main building of two floors and a basement, containing seven large and two small rooms on the first floor, and two large rooms on the ground floor, with smaller ones over them which were used as offices. In addition there was at the back a large recreation room, subsequently converted into a dining-room, with a laundry underneath it. Another building of one story, known as the "pavilion," formed with the main building three sides of a square and contained eleven large and three small rooms. Besides these there was a large detached room and out-buildings, comprising kitchens, lavatories, etc. Structurally the buildings were sound and dry, the walls inside distempered and fairly clean, the corridor floors cemented. The wards as found were

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in an extremely dirty condition, but those on the first floor of the main building were light and capable of being well ventilated, while those in the pavilion were narrower and darker and ventilation much more difficult. All the rooms were heated by wood-burning stoves. Of the twenty-one large rooms in the building, eighteen were wards, one was made a linen store, one a surgical store, and one formed the theatre. This last was a moderately large room, very well lit by three windows ; it had a cement floor and was admirably suited to its purpose. Of the small rooms, three made bedrooms for the doctors, one was made into a dispensary, another into an X-ray room, and the rest were used as offices.

On the taking over of the hospital the Serbians kindly removed all the patients, except twenty severe cases, to other hospitals, in order to allow the Unit to clean the place thoroughly. . This was begun on November 19th. In the wards the floors, walls, and bedsteads had first to be scrubbed with turpentine to free them from vermin. The number of beds in the hospital was reduced from 330 to 275, but even then, owing to the narrowness of the pavilion wards, there was very little room between the two rows of beds.

As soon as the wards were clean the beds were made up in hospital regulation order, each bed having a long and short mackintosh and draw-sheet; three blankets, and a warm quilt. On them were placed all

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the things necessary for the patient, such as brush, flannel, soap, towels, slippers, stockings, night-shirt or pyjamas, and mug. Each ward was fitted out with the necessary number of feeders, medicine glasses, hot bottles, dressing bowls, etc., and in a few days small sterilizers, dressing trays, continuous irrigators, etc. Various kinds of limb baths were made by different members of the staff out of petrol and other tins, and cupboards to contain all these were fashioned out of packing cases.

The whole hospital had to be lit by oil lamps ; electric light was laid on to the theatre, but owing to the insufficiency of the main electric supply this light could not be relied on, and a large oil pressure lamp, purchased in Malta for the purpose, was used there.

A main water supply was laid on to the main building and kitchen, but it was some time before a supply in the pavilion was obtained. The water supply of Uskub is good and safe, being obtained from two artesian wells, but the pumping is intermittent and consequently the supply was frequently cut off-for this reason the zoo-gallon tank taken out by the Unit was of much use in providing a store of water. Hot water was obtained from (1) the kitchen boiler, (2) a portable boiler with a wood fire, (3) two Ewart boilers with 6-burner Primus lamps, taken out by the Unit. These latter were very useful in the theatre and at night.

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It was found at once that the drainage of the hospital was in a hopeless condition. Repeated requests were made to the Serbian authorities to have it put in order. But it was not until representations were made to the Ministry at Nish that the hospital could no longer be carried on under these conditions, owing to the number of cases of illness amongst the staff, followed by the death of Miss Clarke on December 25th, that anything was done to remedy this.

On November 24th the first batch of wounded, numbering 180, arrived at 6 a.m. As the authorities had been requested to send, if possible, the more seriously wounded, most of them were stretcher cases, and in a very short time all the corridors were full of patients. They were in a fearfully neglected and dirty condition and some were much exhausted. Many had not had their clothes off for months, and their wounds had not been dressed for from nine to thirty days. Septic compound fractures had been encased in plaster or starch casings on the field, and had not been touched since, with the result that the limbs were tensely swollen with pus. The condition of many of the wounds was beyond description, and the smell overpowering when the dressings were removed. Nearly all cases were suffering from frost-bitten feet in some degree, and many had one or both feet gangrenous. Every patient was undressed and washed.

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on the stretcher, the hair cut, and wounds temporarily dressed, put into clean pyjamas, and taken to the wards. Considering the fact that few of the orderlies had done any medical work previously, or come into contact with such conditions, the greatest praise was due to the nurses and orderlies for the expeditious way they carried out the work.

On November 25th a further batch of forty wounded were admitted, and by December 4th there were 264 patients in the hospital. From that day onwards the hospital was practically always full, another fifty being taken in on December 21st.

In nearly all cases wounds were in a very septic condition, and the work of constantly changing the dressings, taxed the staff to its utmost. The atmosphere of the wards for the first few weeks was most unpleasant and unhealthy, owing to the amount of sepsis and gangrene.

Amongst the first batch of wounded there were a number of cases of dysentery and typhoid. The latter were transferred to the isolation hospital on December 4th, after which no other cases of infectious diseases were allowed to remain in the hospital.

In the days following the admission of the first and second batches, five cases of tetanus developed, all of which died. These were the only cases of this disease that occurred in the hospital.

By far the greatest number of wounds had been



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produced by shrapnel-comparatively few by bullets, and only one or two by bayonet.

At first the two surgeons, Mr. Morrison and Mr. Eaton, undertook the entire work of looking after the surgical cases, besides being much occupied in operating. Dr. Maitland had charge of the medical wards and supervised the administration of anæsthetics, while Dr. Knobel was in charge of the X-rays room ; but after a short time Dr. Maitland and Dr. Knobel each took over the supervision of about sixty surgical beds in addition to their own work, in order to relieve the pressure on the surgeons.

Either Professor Morrison or Mr. Eaton occupied the theatre most of each day, and both performed a great many operations, about 350 being done between November and February. A great many amputations were performed, and in some cases double amputations had to be done. The patients were very good at bearing pain, and would put 'up with anything when they realized it was for their good ; they were also always most grateful to the sisters, orderlies and doctors for anything that was done for them. They were particularly good at taking anæsthetics, and many patients, coming round on the table while they were being dressed, would sit up and thank the operator and ask for a cigarette. There was only one death under an anæsthetic.

Much use was made of X-rays in order to localiz

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the position of bullets, etc., before operation. The X-ray apparatus was, at the beginning, the only one working in Serbia.

At the third hospital the medical and surgical work was by no means confined merely to the patients in the wards. An out-patient department had to be organized, in order to treat a large number of the townspeople and soldiers on sick leave. So many were they, that for some time they seriously embarrassed the routine work. In Uskub there was a dearth of Serbian doctors; and the few remaining there were occupied from morning until night at the Serbian hospitals looking after the wounded.

Of the sixteen nursing sisters attached to the Unit, one acted as dispenser and one had charge of the theatre. Three sisters were appointed to night duty, leaving eleven to manage eighteen wards. Unfortunately, owing to the excessive amount of sickness amongst the staff, there were rarely more than eight of those on duty at any time between November and February.

In most cases one sister had to supervise and attend on two wards, or sometimes three or four wards with from thirty to sixty patients : she had one orderly to assist her. The only other help in the wards was afforded by a few untrained Serbian ladies and the Austrian prisoners.

The work during the first two months was un-

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doubtedly very heavy, and it was impossible for the staff to obtain sufficient time off duty ; but the two main factors that were responsible for the amount of sickness amongst the staff were (1) the presence of so much sepsis and gangrene in wards that could not be properly ventilated, and (2) the serious amount of sewer-gas that permeated the main building. Over 90 per cent. of the staff were off duty for sickness between November and February. Both amongst the nurses and orderlies there were a number of cases of serious septic throats, some of them being very intractable to treatment. Two of the orderlies and one ward-maid were invalided home early in January, and it was a septic throat, combined with early Graves's disease,- that was responsible for the death of Miss Clarke on December 25th.

But wounded men from the front were not the only patients treated. The situation was complicated by the outbreak of typhus in Serbia, one of the worst ever recorded in medical annals.

Although typhus had appeared sporadically in Serbia as early as November and December, it was not until the second half of January that the epidemic began to assume serious proportions. It was about this time that the first cases were recognized in Uskub, and by the first week in February there were over four hundred cases in the town.

There was, at that date, no organization for isolating,

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the cases, and consequently it spread through the hospitals and barracks of Uskub like wildfire. The fever hospital could not accommodate a tithe of the cases sent into the two isolation wards set apart for this purpose ; and the two big tents in which all new arrivals were placed, whether suffering from typhus or not, were filled to overflowing, the patients mostly being crowded together two in a bed. All the attention they got was from the Austrian prisoners, many of whom were already sickening with it, for the Serbians, at this time, had not at all realized the gravity of the situation.

It was then that the necessity of the British Units in Uskub taking the situation in hand if the epidemic was to be controlled was realized. Accordingly, three of the Unit (Dr. Knobel, Dr. Maitland and Lady Paget) met three doctors of the British Red Cross Hospital in Uskub (Drs. Barrie, Abraham and Banks) to discuss the situation and to lay down a plan of work. They decided that it was necessary for one of their number to go to Nish to obtain powers from the Government, as without this authority no such plan could be carried out. Dr. Barrie went to Nish about the 12th of March, and received there, from M. Pashitch, the Prime Minister, a promise to appoint without delay a Committee of Serbian and British representatives for the sanitary control of the town, civil and military. This consisted of three

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members : one Military (medical) representative (Serbian) ; one Police representative (Serbian) ; one Medical representative (British). The town was divided into three districts, each represented by one medical and one police officer, responsible for carrying out, within their district, all orders of Dr. Knobel and Dr. Shushkalovitch, appointed Officers of Health. The work of this executive body covered the entire ground of the epidemic in Uskub, and included the inspection of hospitals, barracks, refugee camps, prisons, dwelling-houses, cafés, taverns, etc.

It was also decided to enforce (a) Compulsory notification of cases ; (b) Compulsory isolation of cases ; (c) Compulsory disinfection of houses and clothing ; (d) Examination of contacts ; (e) Compulsory formation of observation wards in all hospitals ; (f) Compulsory scrutinization of all passengers leaving trains at Uskub ; (g) Compulsory closing of all public places, churches, mosques, theatres, etc.

It was, of **course**, not possible, until the arrival of reinforcements, to put so large a scheme into full operation, but **the** preliminary work of inspecting hospitals, so as to be able to estimate the dimensions of the problem which had to be dealt with, was at **once** begun by Dr. Knobel and Dr. Shushkalovitch.

Two buildings were immediately put at the disposal of the Unit by the Commanding Officer of **the** district for use as isolation hospitals. The buildings

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were situated on a hill about a mile outside the town, the whole group affording almost ideal conditions for an isolation camp, and this was the group of buildings which came to be known as the Typhus Colony, or the Sixth Reserve Hospital.

One of the two blocks was the newly-built cadet school. This was carried out on lines which for Serbia were quite revolutionary. There was a bathroom outside with hot and cold water laid on, laundry, latrines, etc. The other block was one of a group of three pavilions then in use as a hospital, though also originally built for a cadet school. After much pressure and repeated promises, both blocks were handed over (about the 26th of February), Dr. Barrie taking charge of the new cadet school and Dr. Maitland of the large hospital. Another building on the same lines as the new cadet school, nearing completion, was also promised within three or four weeks.

It is impossible to give any idea of the original state of the hospital and its surroundings ; in all the wards typhus cases were mixed up with the others, spreading infection right and left. But the stables where the Austrian prisoners were quartered were the greatest source of danger. These were long lines of buildings, long and airless, the smoke from the open furnace in one corner hanging always in the roof because there was no vent for it. At the entrance were pools of filthy water, which collected

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in the holes of the mud floor, and all along the sides and down the middle wretched figures in foul old uniforms were huddled together on dirty straw. Many were lying hidden under great-coats, some shuddering, some quite still. When the coats were lifted to look under, six dead bodies were found in a single building and no one to carry them away. All the living were in a painful state of emaciation, those who had no real illness being faint with hunger, for in the demoralization wrought by the Outbreak of typhus there was no one responsible for their regular feeding. From this time onward, before the buildings were handed over to the Unit, Dr. Maitland spent his days up there, superintending the food supplies, directing such Austrian prisoners as were fit for any work in the construction of stone causeways through the swamps of impassable mud which separated the different pavilions of the hospital, and in making arrangements for the segregation of typhus cases.

By about the 28th both the buildings had been handed over. Dr. Maitland at once went into residence there, while Lady Paget was up every day looking to the equipping of the kitchen and staff rooms, and superintending with Dr. Maitland the cleaning and disinfecting of wards. The staff was, of course, utterly inadequate to the task, but the first necessity was to create a place in which to isolate the cases. The disease was increasing at an alarming

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rate, and with every day that passed was getting more out of hand, Besides Dr. Maitland and Lady Paget and Dr. Knobel, who was working the town, there was at this time one fever nurse, who -had volunteered for the work, and one ward-maid. It meant working at very high pressure all through the day and long after dark, but it was necessary, as the work of the Health Commission under Dr. Knobel was at a stand-still until accommodation could be provided for the cases in the town, and it was a sheer necessity for the health of the community that they should be taken in somewhere.

. By March 1st one pavilion was cleaned and disinfected and a staff of Austrian prisoners organized, all chosen because they had had typhus. On that day the town was notified that the hospital was ready to receive cases, and the pavilion was filled the same day. The other two pavilions were then emptied and disinfected. On March 5th these were ready, and on notification to the town authorities were at once filled the same day, the number of cases accommodated in the three pavilions being **288**.

The condition in which the patients arrived was for the most part deplorable. They were driven up in the small open carriages provided by the Serbian Administration, half unconscious, shaking with fever and often almost naked. On arrival they were turned out of the carriage, regardless



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whether they could stand or not, or as to whether there was anyone to receive . them—for there were neither porters nor sentries at the hospital, typhus being its own protection ; and it was not a rare occurrence for one of the staff leaving the pavilion to find some poor wretch lying in the mud outside, unconscious and naked, except for the blanket round him, just where the driver had left him.

There was practically no nursing available at this time, and the most that could be attempted was to see that every patient was thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before he was put in the ward, his clothing all destroyed, whether or no there was any clean clothing available into which to put him. Sometimes there was not ; all the available ready-made shirts in the town had been bought up, and it took time to have them made. It was a question of waiting till they could be provided with adequate clothing and medical conditions generally, or removing the deadly peril from the hospitals and barracks of the town at once ; and, recognizing that the safety of the whole community depended on it, the latter course was chosen. The work of the wards was practically being done by Austrian prisoners, who worked by instructions from Dr. Maitland under the superintendence of Sister Henry and Nurse Isherwood. Under them the patients at any rate had the

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cardinal conditions for typhus, namely, plenty of fresh air, ice on the head, and a supporting treatment. The great difficulty of the situation lay in the fact that, in order to withdraw the infectious cases from the other hospitals and from the barracks and refugee centre in the town, the wards had been opened while the organization was still incomplete. No more nursing help was available from the surgical hospital until reinforcements arrived, and as no cook was then obtainable, all the food for the staff had to be sent up ready cooked twice a day.

Then there was the ever-present trouble of orders and regulations forgotten or neglected by the Serbian and Austrian attendants, without a staff adequate to supervise and see them carried out-as, for instance, when the laundry, which was strictly ordered to be disinfected on the spot, found its way down to the surgical hospital, where it was mixed with the other washing, thus necessitating the sterilizing of a far greater quantity of linen than would otherwise have been necessary. But the vital point was to get the scheme working in some way or other, so as to relieve the pressure in the town, and to give the Health Commission room to order their redistribution of cases among the different hospitals. When Colonel Subotitch, the Vice-President of the Serbian Red Cross, came down from Nish on March 8th, he stated that it was the only adequate scheme of **isola-**

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tion at work i.n Serbia, and that the system was a model for the whole country.

Meanwhile, every day more cases were being received, taxing the staff to the very utmost.

It was agreed that at least twenty-four hours' notice should be given before the arrival of any sick exceeding the number of twenty. The resources, particularly in the matter of staff, were never at any time quite adequate to deal with more than fifty admissions at a time, and then only with due notice being observed.

Here are three instances in which the authorities failed to fulfil these conditions. In the first case 60 patients were dumped down with three hours' notice ; in the second, 95 with a few hours' notice, but with no information as to time of arrival ; and thirdly, the most flagrant, there came one afternoon, with no previous notice whatever, an ambulance with six patients. These. volunteered the statement that . there were 30 to follow. Before night had closed in the Unit was dealing, miserably and inadequately, with 120 cases, each one of which had to pass through as exact a process of disinfection as if he had come under pre-arranged conditions. 'The wards that day suffered from neglect and these poor patients suffered from exposure. This is the sort of thing with which the hospital so often had to contend.

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One of the chief causes for anxiety arose from the unreliability of the water supply. Often and urgently as the danger of cutting off the supply was impressed on the authorities, the hospital was subject to this calamity to the very end, and the crisis used to come upon it without any warning. Sometimes the water supply was cut off for some hours, often for the day, and once for two days. "To me, personally," says Lady Paget, "the days when there was no water were days of mental torture—a nightmare of remembrance. Never shall I forget going round the wards from bed to bed, seeing the flushed, fevered faces and the dry, parched mouths, and hearing the incessant cry of 'Water, sister ! water !' from every corner of the room. Those too ill to speak raised trembling hands in supplication. It was heart-rending, and enough to drive one mad, when we knew we had not a drop of water to give them. We used to send the ambulance into the town loaded with small vessels to bring us back water, and also bought oranges and lemons, cutting them up into quarters and giving them to the men to suck."

On one occasion patients had to be sent back whence they came because there was no water for the washing and disinfecting, and without this process **they** could not be admitted to the clean wards.

Sanitation, or the lack of it, was an ever-present nightmare, for bad as the drains had been at the

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Third Reserve, they were worse at the Sixth. In a hospital set aside for fevers, with the summer fast approaching, pure sanitation was imperative. Behind the pavilions were two overflowing cesspits, so imperfectly made and located as to fail to provide for percolation. The level of the surface of the fluid lay above the basement of the pavilion where the Serbian orderlies slept, and so the floor of the entrance to their room was always wet with sewage. From the first moment of the arrival of the Unit at the Sixth Colony the necessity of emptying the cesspits was urged upon the sanitary authorities. Day after day messages were sent down to the Sanitation Office the Staff, P.M.O., the General and various other officials were interviewed, but all in vain !

There was \*but one pump, and that was in requisition elsewhere. The Sanitary Engineer occasionally made an appearance, with effusive apologies for the delay and a promise for the morrow. Nevertheless, it was four weeks before the good news was heard that the pump was on its way to the hospital. First of all it was arranged that it should empty the cesspit outside the staff residential block, and then that it should proceed to the pavilions. It did not arrive that day-it was seen the-same evening on the roadside some distance away, where the carters had left it when the hour of six struck and they ceased work. This entailed bringing the oxen the whole

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way out from town again to bring that pump two hundred yards.

The operation of emptying, however, was begun the next day. The following morning the pump was gone, and it was presumed it had been taken to the pavilion, having finished the work at the residence. "To our disgust," writes Lady Paget, "we were informed that it was not at the pavilion, but on its way back to town, and to increase our annoyance, the residential cesspit had not been a quarter emptied. Internal sanitation was thus indefinitely delayed, and we were compelled once more to send away our plumbers, whom we had procured with great difficulty.

<sup>cc</sup> A week later, after violent measures on our part, the pump returned. It was four days, however, before that pump was worked, because the men were taking a holiday. That particular cesspit was emptied, and our residence was at length made possible. The pump, however, never went to the pavilions. It went straight home, despite our efforts to deflect its path. A week or so afterwards came the crowning piece of folly, when a Serbian Medical Commission appeared to inquire into the state of the pavilions. As a result of their investigations, they suggested that the only remedy would be to dig other cesspits farther away and lower down which would drain, by a system of pipes, the other and

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more noxious ones. At this we threw up our hands in despair ! ”

By the time the three pavilions were actually ready to receive cases, the building handed over to the Red Cross had not yet been prepared for use, so that accommodation for all the patients had to be provided, and although on March 6th they opened one or two of their wards, the Red Cross organization was only able to take in 70 cases, and it was not until about the 18th, several days after both Dr. Knobel and Lady Paget had gone down with typhus, that its hospital was in full working order. Even then it could only accommodate 130 patients. The Red Cross Unit had itself suffered very heavily from disease-small-pox, diphtheria, and typhus-during January and February, so that they had withdrawn altogether from their surgical hospital in order to nurse their own staff. Two of their orderlies died of typhus, and when they came up to ‘the Typhus Colony, out of their original staff of -eighteen only twelve were available for work. However, Dr. Barrie found three English nurses at Nish, who came to help, so that when the Red Cross eventually commenced work they had a staff of fifteen-four nurses; four doctors, and seven orderlies for 130 beds ; whereas Lady Paget’s Unit commenced work with a -staff of five-two sisters, two doctors, and Lady Paget herself for 300 beds.

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The following extract from Lady Paget's diary gives a succinct account of events in the hospital :

“ **March 1st.**—Dr. Maitland went to live at the Sixth, and first pavilion was filled.

“ **March @.**—Sister Henry and Nurse Isherwood came into residence at the Sixth.

“ **March 6th.**—Two staff orderlies (one Russian, one Austrian, detailed off, -one to work in the kitchen and one to do housework) went down with typhus.

“ **March 8th.**—I went down with typhus.

“ **March 13th.**—Dr. Knobel went down with typhus.

“ **March 14th.**—Dr. Bellingham Smith, from 2nd S.R.F. Unit (Lady Wimborne's), came up to the Sixth to help Dr. Maitland.

“ **March 16th.**—Our two staff cooks went down with typhus, leaving us again to do our own cooking.

“ **March 17th.**—Nurse Isherwood went down with typhus.

“ **March 20th.**—Dr. Moon went down with typhus.

“ **March 24th.**—Four nurses, one lady bacteriologist, and two orderlies from the Wimborne Unit came up to the Sixth.”

Between the 17th and 24th March the following people, all working in some capacity on the Serbian staff at the Sixth Hospital, went down with typhus :

Two Greek doctors—one was nursed at his home,



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one by the British Red Cross ; one died, one survived.

Two Austrian doctors-nursed in Lady Paget's wards ; one died, one survived.

One Serbian inspector-nursed at his home ; died.

One Serbian officer (voluntary assistant)-nursed by the British Red Cross ; died.

Two Serbian sisters (voluntary)-one nursed by the British Red Cross, survived ; one nursed in Lady Paget's ward, survived.

So that, 'between March 6th and 24th, sixteen workers went down with typhus. The conditions thus created are graphically described by Lady Paget.

" I must point out," she writes; " that when I went down with typhus on the 8th, Sister' Henry was put on for special day duty with me and Nurse Isherwood for night. As this left no one in the wards, Sister Scott went up on the 9th, and on the 10th Sister Round replaced Nurse Isherwood on night special, setting her free for the wards again. An examination of- the diary will show that on the 17th Sister Scott and Nurse Isherwood were the only nurses in the wards, 'and after Nurse Isherwood began typhus on the 17th, Sister Scott remained alone in charge of 300 men until the 24th, when we were relieved by the arrival of four nurses belonging to the Wimborne Unit. So great was the strain

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on our nursing resources that for two days and nights Nurse Isherwood, with a temperature of  $104^{\circ}$ , was putting ice on her own head, as Dr. Knobel and I were by then both unconscious and needing constant attention.

“ The situation was further complicated on the 16th. The two cooks—one an Austrian, the other a Serb-whom we had found with great difficulty a few days before, went down with the disease.

“ From March 15<sup>t</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Dr. Maitland, assisted by me until the 8<sup>th</sup>, undertook the whole responsibility of the organization of both staff and hospital, as well as superintending the outside work done by the Austrians, such as making paths, laying down cement floors, drains, etc. When I started typhus, Mr. Chichester took my place in assisting Dr. Maitland in his work. This meant working, long hours by day, and, as far as Dr. Maitland was concerned, from the 8<sup>th</sup> onwards, when the staff went down with typhus, being up almost every hour of the night, as well. It was only the arrival of Dr. Bellingham Smith on the 14<sup>th</sup> that made it possible for Dr. Maitland to carry through his work.

“ On the 20<sup>th</sup> Dr. Moon developed typhus. He was then living in the surgical hospital (Third Reserve), and of course had to be moved at once. The problem was, where to put him. There was no space in our temporary staff quarters and the promised building

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was not ready. He was taken up to the Colony on the morning of the 20th.

“ By a mercy the day was fine, so that he could lie outside so long as the sun lasted ; but the sun went down, alas, before a room was made ready in the new building. It was well on in the evening before Dr. Moon could be put to bed, and it was only by the staff threatening, cajoling, and helping by turns with the manual work that this was at last possible.

“ In spite of all difficulties and dangers,, Dr. Maitland holds the proud record of not having lost a single case among the members of his British staff nursed at the Colony. The five cases all recovered—a unique record in Serbia last winter.”

When, on October 22nd, the Bulgarians entered Uskub, the Serbian authorities had not at their disposal sufficient transport to save the hospital equipment. Without this, Lady Paget's Unit could not have been of any service to the Serbians.. She, therefore, decided to remain with her wounded when the town was in the hands of the enemy. The Unit was taken prisoner, and, after some weeks' delay, sent back to England.

### THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITALS

Since the beginning of the world-war the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies has rendered

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invaluable service to the Allies with its Red Cross organization. It has sent units to the various fronts. Those sent to the Serbian front were contributed by the Scottish Federation of the Union. The first unit sent out was that under the charge of Dr. Eleanor Soltau, which arrived in Serbia in December, 1914. They had been sent out to nurse surgical cases, and the hospital they formed at Kraguyevatz remained a surgical hospital until it was evacuated on October 25th, 1915. But the Unit found, on its arrival, that it had a far more serious work before it, for the typhus epidemic, which had begun in the disgracefully dirty and overcrowded hospitals left behind by the Austrians, flowed over Serbia like a flood. No one will ever know what the mortality was from that terrible outbreak, but this we know, that more than a quarter of the Serbian doctors died, and two-thirds of the remainder had the disease, a fact which speaks volumes for the devotion of the Serbian medical profession, and is some indication of what the ravages must have been among the general population.

To Dr. Soltau's everlasting credit, she took over, with her small staff and for such an increase of work her inadequate equipment, No. 6 Reserve Hospital for typhus cases and No. 7 Reserve Hospital for, ordinary medical cases, in addition to her surgical hospital, which was full. The Committee hurried out reinforcements and equipment. For three long

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months those women worked there, facing the hard work and the long strain with indomitable spirit. There were three deaths among the Unit, young lives given in a great cause, and nine cases of illness, and still the effort never relaxed.

The British Government sent out a Commission under Colonel Hunter, which did invaluable sanitary work outside the hospitals. There was also a French Commission and an American one, which came out with all the wealth of the Rockefeller Institute at its back. Other Units-French, Russian, American and British-took their share of the work under the Serbian Relief Committee-and at last, by May, the epidemic was over.

It is a strange, dark, gruesome time to look back on ; but one marked by many brave deeds and much unrecorded heroism. It will always be a proud 'fact in the story of the Scottish Women's Hospital that it took its share, too, in that great battle. At the end of the time Dr. Soltau herself fell ill with diphtheria and was invalided home. After that the Fever Unit, which had had charge of the typhus cases, was sent to Mladenovatz to open camp hospitals behind the Second Army. Dr. Beatrice MacGregor, as Chief Medical Officer, and Colonel Ghentchitch, the Head of the Medical Department, asked for 400 beds, but only **200** were ever opened, for Serbia was so healthy during that long, quiet summer. The

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camp, planned by the Administrator of the Union, Mrs. Haverfield, was on a beautiful site, looking across the Kosmaj, the mountain which gave its name to one of the great battles of the preceding year. So grateful were the Serbs for the services rendered, that they built a drinking fountain with the inscription, “ In Memory of the Scottish Women’s Hospitals.” Mladenovatz is at the junction of the broad gauge line to Belgrade and the narrow gauge line to Valjevo. It was at the latter place that the new Unit, sent out under Dr. Alice Hutchison, was stationed. She had volunteered for typhus work in Serbia as soon as the enteric epidemic in Calais was over. She had a very fine Camp Hospital, perfect in every detail of sanitation and organization, under her charge.

The Valjevo Hospital was close behind the First Army and had medical cases from it during the whole summer, but it arrived too late for typhus, for on its way out it was stopped by Lord Methuen at Malta, to help with the pressure of cases from the Dardanelles. The last bit of work that summer carried out by the Scottish Federation was the staffing and organizing the Serbian Military Hospital at Lazarevatz.

Then came the invasion and all the horrors of the retreat. One hospital after another had to be evacuated, and a field ambulance was formed in conjunction with the Serbians, called the Second Serbo-English Field Ambulance, of which the British Medical

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Officers were Dr. Chesney and Dr. Laird. The field ambulance trekked over half Serbia during the retreat, always trying to form hospitals, always arriving to find the town they came to evacuated. It was with this Unit I travelled from Pristina to Lipljan, as described in a previous chapter. Dr. Chesney was a woman of great force of character, and is, I understand, most **skilful** in her profession.. Dr. Laird looked barely out of her teens, but is, I am told, a surgeon of great skill, who can be trusted with even major operations.

The hospitals all came down to the West Morava valley, bringing in every case their full equipment with them, not to any great purpose, for eventually it was all seized by the Germans. Dr. MacGregor, managed to put in a fortnight's excellent work at Kraguyevatz, where she opened a hospital of 600 beds in the Artillery Barracks and a big dressing-station, 1,000 cases a week passing through her hands.

The Surgical Hospital at Kraguyevatz was the last to be moved. It had taken over two vast houses, or inns, and more than doubled its accommodation. At last it, too, had to be evacuated, and a decision taken as to future movements. With Sir Ralph Paget's approval; the British Units were given the choice of escaping or of staying in the country. The Scottish Women's Hospitals formed up two parties for retreat over the Montenegrin Mountains, one from

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Kraljevo, under Dr. MacGregor, and one from Krushevatz; 'under Mr. Smith, the energetic and indefatigable secretary. Those who remained behind were also' in two parties, the one under DE Hutchison at Vrnjatchka Banja, and the remains of the Lazarevatz and Kraguyevatz Units under- Dr. Holway and Dr. Inglis at Krushevatz. The fate that awaited the two parties was very different, Dr. Hutchison's being taken as prisoners to Austria, while the other was able to work in a Serbian hospital until the day it was evacuated in the middle of February. And the last Unit, caught at Salonica, and unable to advance into Serbia, took up the work at that end, and, under Dr. Mary Blair, cared for the train-loads of refugees escaping southward, passed them on to the ships, and eventually arrived with some 5,000 of them in Corsica, where they opened a general hospital and an infectious diseases hospital, where they did all the medical work, supervised the sanitation, and supplied medical aid to the Serbians in all the villages.

### **MRS. ST. CLAIR STOBART'S UNIT**

The record of the Unit presided over by Mrs. St. Clair Stobart is as brilliant a one as either of the two recorded above. Mrs. Stobart is a veteran in war work. She was at the head of a Unit in the first Balkan War with her Women's Military Hospital, the first ever entirely staffed and run by- women.,



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It was placed at Kirk-Kilisse, and handled 729 Bulgarian and Turkish wounded. As soon as the present war broke out Mrs. Stobart organized an ambulance service in Belgium. It rendered yeoman service in Brussels and Antwerp, being present throughout the siege of the latter town. After the evacuation of Antwerp, at the request of the French Government the hospital transferred its activities to Cherbourg, where Mrs. Stobart laboured for four months.

Then came the call for help for typhus-stricken Serbia. Mrs. Stobart did not hesitate to respond to the appeal, and in April, 1915, she set up a large hospital entirely under canvas at Kraguyevatz. She chose this in preference to hospital buildings, as typhus is spread chiefly by lice, and these would; without doubt, have found their way into most of the houses ; so the better way to stamp it out was to get right away from all dwellings. But the ravages of the disease was not confined to the military. Thousands of peasants were among- its victims. Kraguyevatz is the market-town of the district, and every week hundreds of peasants came thither to sell their farm produce. One day Mrs. Stobart was standing on the roadside talking to one of the officers, when some peasants passed along looking wretched and ill. " Who," she asked, " is attending to the peasants in the districts around ? " The reply was, " No one. Our doctors, those we have left, are all

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needed at the Front, and many have died-of typhus ; we have no means of attending to the poor people, and the state of things in some of the villages is appalling.”

Mrs. Stobart at once decided to create an outdoor dispensary service to come to the aid of the civil population. The next market-day she had a tent pitched on the, roadside with a notice in Serbian to the effect that all peasants bringing bottles would receive medicine and medical aid free. Before a couple of months had passed by relief to fully 10,000 had been given. Mrs. Stobart relates an incident which shows the confidence she was able to inspire. “ A man,” she states, “ brought his little girl very ill with diphtheria-another of his children had died the day before. We injected serum, and the child soon began to recover. The next day the father arrived with the rest of his children, six in all, for us to attend to. Realizing the necessity of doing further work in this direction, I cabled to the Serbian Relief Committee for materials and staff and six more dispensaries.”

These dispensaries were established in tents on the principal roads radiating out of Kraguyevatz. At each- was a doctor, a nurse, an orderly and a motor ambulance with its chauffeur. Thither came thousands of peasants on foot and in carts for medical aid and advice. Those whose cases

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allowed of it were treated on the spot and sent back to their homes with a supply of medicines and directions as to treatment. Cases too serious to be thus treated were conveyed to the hospital at Kraguyevatz by the motor ambulance; These dispensaries were established about thirty miles from the central hospitals. As the peasants often came a distance of thirty or forty miles to visit them, some idea of the large extent of country succoured by the Stobart organization may be imagined.

In October came the Austro-Hungarian advance, and all civilian work at the hospital had to be stopped. It was at this time that Mrs. Stobart, who previously had been approached by the Serbian Government, was asked to take command of a Field Hospital at the Front. They raised her to the rank of Major in the Serbian Army, and placed her in command of what was called the first Serbian-English Field Hospital. Mrs. Stobart took with her as personnel two women doctors, five nurses, thirty Serbian orderlies, thirty ox-wagons and six motor-cars. Her column was attached to the Shumadia Division. First they were ordered to the Bulgarian Front on the south, where Mrs. Stobart set up her hospital close to headquarters. But they had not been there many days before they were ordered, with their Division, to the Austro-Hungarian frontier in the north. The distance was covered by rail, Mrs. Stobart having command of

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the train conveying her unit. They progressed as far as Barchinatz, where the work of attending to the wounded was carried on under the booming of the guns and the whistling of shells.

Then the order came to retreat ; and the terrible three months' retreat of over 400 miles began : retreat not only of the army, but of the whole population, men, women and children fleeing for their lives.

In the retreat the Stobart Unit was with the First Army, and travelled via Kraljevo and Rashka to the Montenegrin frontier. Thence it continued the journey by Ipek and Andreyevitza to Scutari. Mrs. Stobart brought her column through safely without a break, without one case of insubordination-a remarkable achievement for any commander, but especially so for a woman. Absolutely unarmed, solely by moral power and influence-Mrs. Stobart managed her staff, composed not only of women now, but also of many Serbian male orderlies. She endured all the hardships with them-riding at the head of the column encouraging and helping them.

At Ipek, on the Montenegrin frontier, they were told that the roads would henceforth " not be good," -and that they must cut their four-wheeled wagons in half. They therefore sawed them in two, left the back portion behind, and " carried on " with the front half. As half a cart is only half as large as

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a whole cart, this meant that half, their hospital material had to be abandoned. Mrs. Stobart gave it to the hospital at Ipek. The motor ambulances she gave to the Prefect of the town, to burn, if the enemy should arrive.

After two days of travel, on tracks which grew more and more impossible, they received orders to burn even the two-wheeled carts and proceed -as best they could with any ponies they might have had the prevision to buy. Of ponies and horses they had eighteen.

“ The journey, on foot, over the mountains of Montenegro and Albania, from Ipek to Scutari, is,” says Mrs. Stobart, “ for thousands of human beings a memory which-owing to the mental as well as the physical suffering endured-will cause life to be seen henceforth through darkened spectacles. . Roads ceased, and even the tracks were mainly those trampled by the multitudes in front. Over passes five thousand feet high, between mountains eight thousand feet high, snow, ice, boulders, unbroken forest, mud-holes, bridgeless rivers. And always those pitiless mountains ! Mountains with steep, snow-covered slopes-or mountains of grey, bare rock—precipitous, shutting out for thousands all hope of return to home and nationhood.”

It took the column three weeks to march from Ipek to Scutari. During this time they slept in the snow

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on the mountains, or on beech leaves in the forests, with occasional shelter in the ' huts of Montenegrin or Albanian peasants-who were in general, however, not too hospitable. During three days. water was unprocurable, but fortunately there was plenty of snow, and they melted this for tea-water. The ponies and oxen ate or drank- the snow as snow, and often had to be content with decayed beech leaves for their food.

The column reached Scutari on December 20th, eleven weeks from the date of its departure from Kraguyevatz. At Scutari Mrs. Stobart surrendered the command of the column, as there was no further work in prospect, and received the thanks of the Crown Prince and of the military authorities.

### **MRS. HANKIN HARDY'S MISSION**

Another mission which rendered immense service to Serbia was that directed by Mrs. Hankin Hardy, the wife of the well-known minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Mrs. Hardy holds a diploma from the Medical' Training School at Melbourne. The Serbian. campaign was not her first experience of war work, as during the South African war she had established a hospital in connection with the Natal Volunteer Service, and went through the entire siege of Ladysmith.

Mrs. Hardy, on December 12th, 1914, left England

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for Serbia on board a troopship. Travelling by the same ship was the first "Scottish Women's Unit (Hospital)" of 30 members. She paid all her own expenses, and her work was voluntary from beginning to end.

On January 4th she arrived in Kraguyevatz and after visiting the "Gendarmeriska Kassarna" volunteered to remain and work there. To assist her Mrs. Hardy had only one Serbian lady surgeon and a few inexperienced orderlies. She had charge of 600 patients, wounded and sick, but had for 'all these no change of garments or bedding. Thousands of wounded soldiers were soon sent from Belgrade, and for these hotels, restaurants and all the available buildings were requisitioned as hospitals. In a short time over 20,000 soldiers were lying ill with wounds, typhus, typhoid, influenza, etc., and cholera was feared with the advent of the warm weather.

In February, 1915, Mrs. Hardy, with the help of Dr. Yakschitch and Mdlle. Draga Arangelovitch, organized a league of women known as the "National League of Serbian Women," of which she was elected the National President. The League was started to fight typhus, not only among the soldiers, but amongst the civilian population. The plan of work was placed before the Military Medical Authorities, approved by them, and adopted by the Government. Four thousand copies of her address to the women of the country were distributed free of charge throughout the

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country, and many other branches of the League were started. Unfortunately the League had not the equipment necessary to carry out its programme in its entirety. However, a great deal was accomplished. Visitation of all the houses in the four districts of Kraguyevatz was organized, the sanitation of the town was improved considerably, and a dispensary started for the poor, doctors taking it in turns to treat the cases. Over 9,000 were treated in four months. Mrs. Hardy had hoped to carry out a plan of country dispensaries and relief, and she was requested to visit England on behalf of this work and also to get sufficient funds to furnish hospital barracks to accommodate four thousand patients. Before she left Serbia on this mission she had the pleasure of witnessing the arrival of Colonel Hunter and a staff of efficient men from the British War Office, who brought with them disinfecting apparatus, etc., and soon their presence was felt.

On April 3rd Mrs. Hardy started from Kraguyevatz for Nish accompanied by her Secretary and Treasurer of the League, Dr. Yakschitch and Mdlle. Draga Arangelovitch, Here she paid a visit to the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance, and afterwards paid an official visit to Pirot, where she inspected the disinfecting station for the army, which 'was found thoroughly well equipped in every detail.

From Pirot Mrs. Hardy went on to Salonica by way of Nish. England was reached on April 22nd. Here



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began her task of raising the equipment for the hospital barracks. She had the support of Sir Thomas Lipton, and other notable people. The people of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and other friends responded generously to her appeal. Her task was no light one, as many thousand articles were required;? including 4,000 bedsteads, 25,000 blankets, 1,500 pairs of sheets and a long list of other things required by the fives and tens of thousands.

There was a splendid response to her appeal made through her lectures -given in various parts of the country. Friends gave her personal gifts, while the Serbian Relief Fund voted the sum of £3,000 toward her work and the Serbian Red Cross £2,000.

Towards the end of July Mrs. Hardy returned to Serbia, to work in the name of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. She arrived there early in August and had a very warm welcome, first at Nish and then at Kraguyevatz, from the chief men of the Military Medical Staff, representatives of the various societies, the President of the Red Cross Society and the members of her own League. Mrs. Hardy was somewhat disappointed to find that during her absence the patients in the -hospital in the Gendarmeriska Kassarna had been evacuated to other hospitals\* On visiting the hospital she found in many of its numerous rooms hundreds of bales and cases of all sizes and shapes, piled up to -the ceilings, which had been sent

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to her from all parts of the world, as the result of her propaganda for the Serbian cause. The value was estimated at nearly two million francs.

With characteristic energy Mrs. Hardy at once began the work of distribution. This proved very -difficult owing to the scarcity of conveyances for . transport. When she could not get conveyances she organized a corps of men from among the Austrian prisoners as well as from Serbian soldiers to distribute to the various hospitals in the town and country places. One of the bits of work she did before the great retreat was to fully equip the Hospital of the Church of Saint George at Topola, built by King Peter the First as a memorial to his Grandfather Karageorge, who had lived in Topola about a century ago and had there summoned the people to fight for their freedom and liberty. Not only was she able to furnish the hospitals with an abundance of bedsteads (over two thousand), bedding, clothing,. bandages, dressings, etc., but also with great quantities of foodstuffs as well.

When at last she was obliged to retreat from **Kra-**guyevatz and eventually from Krushevatz it was her privilege to help many others who like herself had lost their own personal belongings., equipment, or were absolutely destitute of everything.

I first met **Mrs.** Hardy in the latter town, which she left with the Scottish Women's Unit a few hours before the arrival of the Germans. I saw her again at

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Pristina and finally at Prisrend a few hours before she left for Albania via Montenegro. When I saw her three weeks later at Scutari she gave me a graphic account of the terrible privations she and her party had endured in her difficult journey over the desolate mountain ranges of Montenegro. These, terrible fatigues and privations she had supported with characteristic courage. It must, however, have been a great relief to her when a few days later she and the other Red Cross Units were able to leave San Giovanni di Medua for Brindisi and to know that her strenuous two years' campaign in 'Serbia was, for the time being at least, at an end.

### ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL UNIT

The Royal Free Hospital Serbian Unit; organized and led by Mr. James Berry, F.R.C.S., and Mrs. F. M. Dickinson Berry, M.D., B.S., left England in January, 1915.

When it reached Serbia in February it found that the great stress of work consequent on the Austrian invasion was already over. There had then been an enormous number of wounded in the country and very inadequate means of dealing with them. But in the weeks preceding its arrival there had been no hostilities of any magnitude, and the surgical patients were practically all cases wounded before it arrived and were sent from other hospitals. At the

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time it reached Serbia typhus was beginning to be a serious epidemic throughout the country, but had not attained the terrible proportions it did later.

“Immediately on our arrival at Vrnjatchka Banja,” writes Dr. Berry, “we were given the ‘Terapia’ and the village school to be used as hospitals. The first three weeks of our stay was spent in unpacking stores, cleaning, and in other ways preparing these buildings. This was very hard work, and during the first month we ~~had no~~ outside help except from two Austrian prisoners—one in the kitchen and one in the house. The first batch of patients were cases from other hospitals in the town. They were all surgical; some suffering from long-continued sup-puration, many with limbs in bad positions from neglect or other causes. Many of them were very ill. Early in March we received Austrian prisoners to act as orderlies, and were then able to fill the ‘Terapia’ and the school. A third hospital had been added to our number-viz., the Drzhavna Kafana or State Cafe, which we took on in conjunction with the Red Cross Mission under Captain Bennett, to be used as a receiving or observation hospital. The public baths, supplied by a hot sulphur spring, had been adapted for washing patients; and the two Missions arranged that all cases coming to the town should be washed here, clothes removed for disinfection and the patients received into the

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Drzhavna Hospital, which is situated close to the baths, whence, after two or three days, they passed on to other hospitals, according to their suitability."

There was a typhus hospital in the town consisting of three barques which was, at the time of their arrival, in a very bad condition. The Red Cross Mission proposed to take this over. Dr. Berry suggested that their Unit should co-operate with them in this work, as its staff; both medical and nursing, were anxious for some typhus work, and they offered to take charge of one of the barques. No agreement could be reached, however, as it was considered that the barques were too small for a joint undertaking, so Dr. Berry decided to build a baraque where typhus, or other diseases, as need arose, could be received.

By the time the typhus baraque was opened the epidemic was dying down, and although cases continued to be received there they never filled it. It was used, however, for, many other cases, some medical and some surgical, and was a building which excited much admiration and interest from its comfort, cheapness, and the rapidity with which it was built.

The next building the Unit took on as a hospital was the "Mercur," a fine villa standing in the town, with a large plot of grass behind. This formed an excellent hospital and contained about ninety beds. This building consisted wholly of small rooms, most

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of them allowing easily of four beds. A number -of old wounded cases were treated in this hospital, many of them permanently crippled Austrian prisoners who could not be passed out.

Another villa, named the “Atina,” was also allotted to the Unit and turned into a hospital. This was rather more difficult than the others to arrange on satisfactory sanitary lines, as it stood in the main street and had only a small yard.

In the meantime, the Unit did what it could to help the civil population, for whose needs the medical attendance was woefully inadequate. Crowds of patients came daily to the “Terapia,” many from distant mountain villages.

The Unit had also at times a considerable number of civil cases in its hospitals. Several women, both medical- and surgical cases, were treated in the small wards of the “Terapia,” and cases of recurrent fever, typhus, diphtheria, etc., in men and children at the baraque.

In addition to the work of organizing the hospitals, Mr. Berry's activities were directed towards the provision of a new slaughter house. The insanitary condition of the existing one was such that it 'was a constant danger to the town. The Serbian Govern=ment provided a piece of land, and arrangements were made by Mr. Berry to build a new slaughter house upon it, largely by means of a special donation

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obtained through one of the members of the Unit. Unfortunately the town was invaded by the enemy before this was completed.

The Unit in September had six hospitals with a total of between 300 and 400 beds. The Drzhavna, originally jointly run with the Red Cross Unit, was worked by it alone. They were all in a thoroughly satisfactory, hygienic condition, and well fitted to receive wounded. There were between sixty and seventy orderlies, all of them willing workers and trained in their respective departments. They were Austrian prisoners, the majority of Slav race, mostly Czechs, from Bohemia. Much of the -ward work was done by them, and thus the work of the nurses was that of Army Sisters in Serbian Military Hospitals, viz., directing and supervising the orderlies. They were thus able to run several hospitals with a comparatively small British staff.

As the summer wore on and the long-expected renewal of active hostilities on the Serbian frontier did not take place, the number of patients in the hospitals at Vrnjatchka Banja gradually diminished. On July 27th a meeting of the heads of the British units then in Serbia was summoned at Kraguyevatz to discuss the situation with Sir Ralph Paget, the British Commissioner. It was then unanimously agreed that the units should stay in Serbia at least a few weeks longer.

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Towards the end of September came the news of Bulgaria's mobilization. All passenger traffic on the railways was stopped. At Vrnjatchka Banja day and night troop-trains could be heard running down the valley of the Western Morava on their way to the Eastern front.

On October 8th on visiting Nish, Dr. Berry found the town gaily decorated with flags' in excited anticipation of the arrival of French troops who were expected -from Salonica on the morrow, but who, **never** came. Crowds of refugees were coming in from Pozharevatz, **which** had just been heavily bombarded from the air. No one seemed to know whether the line from Salonica was still open or not. "Among the officials," says Dr. Berry, "both Serb and foreign, pessimism was very marked, and not a few indignant remarks 'were heard about the Allies who had 'deserted' Serbia in her time of need. There was among the people, and to a certain extent among the officials, a strong feeling that Serbia, who in the earlier stages of the war had done so 'much for the allied cause, by decisive victories over the Austrians, should not have been left single-handed to repel a simultaneous invasion by three nations. Although necessarily ignorant of the military reasons which forbade the granting of much-needed help to the sorely tried little nation, we could not help wondering whether these criticisms were not perhaps to some extent justified."



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Two days later, freshly wounded began to dribble into the hospitals and there were tales of severe fighting on the northern frontier. But it was not until the 17th that the Unit received a large batch of severely wounded.

On the 15th news came that the Austrians' were occupying Pozharevatz, Semendria, Belgrade and Obrenovatz. Also that the Bulgars had penetrated the eastern frontier at two points, although it was rumoured that they had been driven back again. Major Gashitch, the energetic and esteemed Serb medical director, warned the Unit that it might receive orders to move at very short notice. Packing cases were brought out by the engineer and made ready for immediate use.

From October 16th till the 18th Vrnstse was full of rumours. War on Bulgaria had been declared by the Great Powers, Varna and Bourgas were being bombarded by the Russians, Strumnitza had been occupied by the French, Tsaribrod by the Serbs, the National Bank had been transferred to Prisrend and the military headquarters to Krushevatz. A strange jumble of truth and fiction, but at the time there was no means of separating the one from the other.

On the 21st a large number of slightly wounded arrived, and as the train which brought them had many severely wounded on board, who went on to

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the Serb hospital at Tchatchak, the Unit was indignant at what seemed a breach of faith on the part of the military authorities. For months before, when entreated by the Serb military authorities to prolong its stay in Serbia, it had been repeatedly assured, both verbally and in writing, that when fresh fighting began only the most severe surgical cases would be sent to it. On pressing the major for an explanation, it was learnt that a secret order had been received that for the present, only slightly wounded were to be sent to the foreign missions, as an order for their withdrawal to the south was to be expected at any moment.

“ On the 27th,” writes Dr. Berry, “ another train-load of wounded, mostly not very severe cases, arrived, and we were all kept busy. On the 28th important news arrived. Uzhitze, to the west, at the head of our valley, was being evacuated, and all British missions to the north of us were being withdrawn to the line of the Western, Morava ; our little town. lay some three miles south of this, between Kralj evo and Krushevatz. Kraguyevatz, fifty miles (by road) to the north, was being evacuated, the Headquarters Staff moving thence to Krushevatz. The seat of Government was being transferred to Kraljevo. About this time officials of the public health and some other departments, together with many ex-ministers, sought refuge at Vrnjatchka

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Banja, the fashionable health resort of Serbia. The place began to be inconveniently overcrowded, and we began to fear short age of food. The 2nd British Farmers' Unit under Mr. Parsons, the Scottish Women's Unit under Dr. Alice Hutchison, and several members of the Wounded Allies' Mission under Dr. Apsland arrived, and considerable re-arrangement of our hospitals took place, The Farmers, who had been obliged to leave Belgrade very hurriedly during the bombardment, took over our **Mercur** Hospital, and the Scottish Women for a short- time had the **Atina**."

The British Commissioner now paid the Unit a hurried visit to explain the arrangements he had been trying to make. with the Serbian authorities for the withdrawal of the British Units to the south or west. Only a very few ox-wagons were obtainable, and it was obvious that most of the Units at Vrnjatchka Banja would have to stay and be captured ; only individual members, who for one reason or another desired to escape, would have the opportunity of making their way mostly on foot across the mountains to the Adriatic. Three of the Unit, together with several of the British Red Cross Unit (mostly English orderlies), went off together under the leadership of Mr.' Gordon. The adventures and trials which they met with on their difficult trek to S. Giovanni di Medua have been graphically

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told by Mr. and Mrs. Gordon in their recently published book. The numbers of Dr. Berry's Unit remained, however, at the average strength of twenty-five, having been reinforced by the addition of the British chaplain and two refugee ladies from Belgrade and Nish.

On Nov. 1st all the Austrian prisoners except four were withdrawn from the hospitals and replaced by sixteen Serbian youths with no personal knowledge whatever of hospital work. On the same day the Serbian military head, although giving no direct order, strongly advised the Unit to withdraw also, abandoning all its stores and personal luggage.. Dr. Charles Mack, an American doctor, kindly consented to take charge of the hospital if the Unit decided to do so, and the great majority of the members were anxious to go. There was a direct short. route across the mountains to Rashka, and thence it would have been possible to get across, *via* Novi Bazaar and Berane, to the Adriatic. But this would have meant walking the whole way, carrying provisions for at least a fortnight. For this it was essential- the party should have at least three or four horses to carry food and blankets. Their hesitation, which lasted for a few. hours, was ended when it was found that the horses they had expected to obtain were not available.

On the following day all the Austrian prisoners

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were restored to them, and the contingent of Serbian youths in their turn withdrew. A week of considerable anxiety ensued. Again nearly all the Austrian prisoners were taken away, a few only, who desired to remain, being allowed to do so. They made their way over the mountains in front of the retreating Serbian Army, and it is feared that many must have perished in the severe cold that set in some ten days later. Day by day the sound of distant cannonade became louder and louder as the Austro-German forces approached. Rumour said that a stand would be made in the valley at Trstenik, a narrow place some three miles to the east. It was said that the digging of trenches had actually begun. It seemed probable that the Unit would find itself in the very centre of a battle. Late in the evening of the 6th a violent explosion, which shook the building, caused some to exclaim : " Here is the first shell ! " But it was caused by the Serbians blowing up the great bridge of Trstenik.

Early on Novs 10th a Hungarian lieutenant with half a dozen soldiers arrived, went all over the hospital, asked for a complete list of the personnel, paid a few compliments on the state of the hospital, put an armed sentry at the gate and departed. In the next few days there were numerous Austro-Hungarian visitors at the hospitals-generals, colonels, a count, and' finally Prince Lobkovitz, who took

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command of the whole district. Colonel Dr. Pick was in charge of all the medical arrangements, 'and his first act was to confirm the appointment of the heads of the Unit, saying he did not wish to interfere in any way with their management of the hospitals and giving the necessary Austrian authority to continue their hospital work under his nominal supervision. He consulted freely with Dr. Berry. and Major Gashitch as to the best means of rearranging the medical work at Vrnjatchka Banja. The Atina was given over for a short time to another English Unit, the baraque was evacuated and then the school, the latter being quickly filled with crowds of frost-bitten Hungarians returning from the mountains, very severe cold having set in on the 17th. Dr. Berry's hospitals were now reduced to two, the Terapia and the Drzhavna. Both were overcrowded with Serb wounded ; at the former patients overflowed into the corridors, where they were put on improvised trestle-beds and mattresses. The evacuation of the slighter cases was then rapidly carried out, and as frost-bitten Hungarians continued to pour into the town, they were asked to admit some of them for whom no other accommodation could be found. This they naturally consented to do.

“ With regard to food,” writes Dr.- Berry, “ we fared, on the whole, fairly well. The Austrians allowed us daily rations, which included a little

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meat ; bread varied in quantity from half a loaf per head when it was abundant to one-fifth when it was scarce, as it often was. Besides these, we had small quantities of tea, coffee, sugar and lard, and various other things. A scale of prices was arranged and the peasants were obliged to 'bring eggs, milk and other provisions to a central office, whence they were distributed among Austrians, English and Serbs. Had we 'been wholly dependent upon the Austrian rations we should have fared badly, but fortunately our own food stores were by no means exhausted, and we had laid in a considerable stock 'of flour, rice and live poultry before the invaders arrived. With these stores the enemy never interfered, although they occasionally threatened to do so.

" On Feb. 18th we were allowed to depart -under the charge of a couple of Hungarian guards; who, however, behaved towards us rather as couriers than as gaolers, and treated us with the greatest friendliness and courtesy. We travelled via Belgrade, Budapest and Vienna to Bludenz on the Swiss frontier, where we were detained nine days, to ensure that any military news that we -might bring from Serbia -should be stale. We reached Zürich on March 2nd, and thence came home via Pontarlier and Paris, the French military- authorities giving us free passes through France and treating us with the utmost respect and courtesy."

## CHAPTER XXI

### HELP OF THE ALLIES AFTER THE GREAT RETREAT

**B**UT the defeat of Serbian arms had not put an end to the activity of the Serbian Relief Fund. On the contrary, it imposed fresh and ever increasing efforts on it. So long as the Serbian Army was able to defend its home territories, the task of the Serbian Relief Fund was to supplement its Medical Service. The converging invasion of the German, Austrian, and Bulgarian Armies introduced a new problem. Many thousands of refugees quitted their homes, and the task of succouring them fell to their Allies. The first object of Bulgarian strategy was to intercept the main avenue of communication between Serbia and the outer world; and this was achieved by the rapid occupation of Uskub (Skoplje) and the Vardar railway.

The driving in of this formidable wedge had two consequences. It automatically limited the escape of civilian refugees, so that the flight never assumed the dimensions of a national migration, and it broke it into two streams. One of these streams moved towards



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Salonica, while the other wandered over primitive roads and inaccessible mountain passes to Scutari and the Adriatic coast. The refugees who escaped to Salonica were, for the most part, minor officials, teachers, Government clerks, and their families, who had settled in Macedonia after its conquest by Serbia in the Balkan Wars. They were not yet merged in the local population, and their work came to an end with the approaching Bulgarian occupation. They included a fair proportion of educated men and women, and the majority were accustomed to something better than the peasant standard of comfort.

The stream which went to the Adriatic coast was composed of different elements. It came chiefly from New Montenegro and the Old Serbian kingdom. Few entire families fled, and the women were barely a tenth of the whole number. There were large numbers of students and youths from the higher schools who fled partly to escape internment, and partly in the hope of completing their education abroad. There were some hundreds of young boys who had marched with their fathers or elder brothers 'in the army. There were also large numbers of men, some of them teachers and officials, but others of the peasant class, who, fled in the hope that, if they could once reach some big country, they would be able to find work. It was not a mass migration, and still less was it organized. It consisted of individual

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## Help of the Allies after the Great Retreat

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refugees, who fled with the army, resolved to throw themselves upon the goodwill of the Allies.

To collect the fugitives of the first stream in Salonica, to feed them there in an organized camp, and to send them away at leisure to a more permanent colony, was a comparatively smooth and easy task. At Salonica they were on friendly soil, secure from attack, with all the resources of the French and British Armies at their disposal. At Scutari, on the other hand, they had fled from invasion to famine ; the enemy threatened and at length overtook them in their retreat, and the control of the Allies over the coast was never fully assured. In spite of these difficulties the agents of the Fund were able to direct both streams with equal success, and, not without adventures and privations, to see the refugees comfortably settled under the care of the French Government in Corsica.

The most difficult and adventurous task in the experience of the Fund fell to Messrs. Theodore Rigg and Robert R. Tatlock, two workers of the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee, who had gained some experience of Relief Work in France. They spent the months of December and January in Scutari and on the Adriatic coast, and in this desolate and distracted country they had to depend entirely on their own resources and initiative. The Serbian Government was in flight. The Montenegrin Govern-

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ment, with its own people starving and the enemy battering its northern defences, could do little or nothing for its Allies. The Italian Navy had throughout this period an imperfect command of the seas. Much that was attempted from the headquarters of the Fund went amiss because the information available as to the movements of the Serbs was erroneous or out of date. A large ship, the *Myrmidon*, full of stores for the army and the refugees, went to Valona instead of Durazzo. Of six small sailing vessels sent with food from Brindisi, five were torpedoed. That Messrs. Rigg and Tatlock none the less managed to find food and organize relief for about ten thousand civilian refugees was a great achievement of perseverance and ingenuity, and their success must have saved many hundreds of lives. Those who know the country can alone appreciate what they did. The reader who does not know it must struggle to imagine a society unaccustomed to any regular or punctual business, tracks which resemble roads only in marking the way from one place to another, and "ports" which have neither jetties nor quays. The following extract from Mr. Tatlock's own description of the retreat of the Serbian Army gives a vivid picture of the conditions and a modest account of the work which he and Mr. Rigg performed:-

"The regiments were led, either by no officers at

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all, or else by officers who were powerless to provide the most primitive necessities for their men. The refugees did not hold their heads high, but very low. They were not proud, but broken-hearted. In the long-march over the snow-filled passes, before we could get food near to them, some of these ruined and mutilated folk had to toil day and night for food and fuel. They killed their horses, they ate herbs growing on the hills, they shot little birds on the trees; they burnt doors and fences, they burnt the unnecessary spokes from the wheels of their carts, they shaved the telegraph posts so thin that they fell;

“ Many of them told us that they had left their villages when fighting took place in the vicinity with the intention of returning in a few days. They never again saw their houses. Every day they found themselves ordered further, back; every day the cold increased; every day their little store of food grew smaller. Then, on the Black Mountain, to this side of Andreyevitza—more solitary, bleaker, more exposed than any mountain in England—came the tragedy that the people of those parts will never forget. A snow blizzard occurred, and at the same time the district became almost denuded of food. One man, who had travelled through Alaska and Siberia, and was clad in thick clothes when he came into Scutari, told me he had never passed through such a four days. He had seen many dead on the hill, and many who

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must die. He had not enough bread. for himself, arid he could give to no man. Twice he fell in the snow, and twice he rose again. He showed me a pocketful of gold,' and said he would have given it all for bread. Some of the refugees had only a franc or two, some no money at all. Bread, even at Podgoritza, was sold at more than ten francs a loaf. .

“ About this time Theodore Rigg arrived in Podgoritza, which is between Andreyevitza and Scutari, and just on the Scutari side of the high pass, where the snowstorm took place. Here he was able to distribute bread to the later refugees as they came in, and even to send some a little part of the way to Andreyevitza. I remained in Scutari, where refugees soon began to arrive. Work there was begun by establishing a large lodging-house, in which refugees could be placed to the number\* of several hundreds. Theodore Rigg soon joined me again, and, before his leaving for a second visit to Podgoritza, where he had left his interpreter to continue the work, we had established additional houses and were also distributing bread daily to those refugees who had found shelter of a kind for themselves in the town. The weaker and poorer were invariably placed in the houses, where we gave them. food every day-soup, meat, haricots, rice, and bread. This work continued for several weeks. .

“ The conditions in Scutari had now- become very

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trying. The remnants of the army flooded every hole in the town ; food became tremendously expensive, until the very mayor and councillors had to deny themselves bread. The Montenegrin banknotes became of less value every day, so that one might almost have thrown them away. , Everybody had banknotes. and no one had gold. Then serious aeroplane bombardments took place, and finally the shopkeepers closed altogether, in a sort of rebellion against the powers that were.

“ During all this time we had to buy food for the refugees. -This became each day and hour more difficult. -Those who had food to sell were enemies of the Serbs. Just at first, I fear, we descended to the lowest in our parleys with them. We flattered them, we talked of the untold wealth that lay in England at our bidding, we rattled the gold in our pockets wherever we went. But our ultimate success in obtaining food and transport was largely due. to our practice of refusing to take sides and of paying promptly and fairly for all we received-a novel proceeding in Scutarir

“ During this time sections of the Serbian Army had been moving off to Medua (the port at which we had landed) and to Durazzo, and soon the refugees began to follow them. I therefore interviewed the Serbian Minister of the Interior and received from him a promise that all refugees at the- coast should be fed

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with the army food.' This relieved our minds considerably, but when I went to Medua to see if the arrangements were working well, I found everything in hopeless confusion. There were about 3,000 people lying on the rocks under the open sky, some having done so during six weeks. The unfortunate authorities had completely lost their heads. There was plenty of excellent food on the shore, but several refugees were dying of hunger every day..

"A large number of little boys, who had formerly been attached to the army, had had no food for eleven hours, and even then had no prospect of any. . I think that day was the busiest of my' life. I got volunteers from among the refugees, who, with a little encouragement, worked as hard as I could wish; We rowed out and fetched food from a small boat which had previously arrived for us. Rigg, happily, had sent me some enormous pots and plates and spoons, and I succeeded in obtaining a number of tents and tarpaulin shelters. I fear I shouted a good deal, but before night we had the satisfaction of being able to smell boiling haricots and rice, the glorious fumes of which swept along the bay and awakened the campers.

"Many of the stronger refugees were now sent by road to Durazzo, and ships took off others from Medua. Rigg now arrived with the news that the Austrians were threatening Scutari. We had not long to remain in Medua. Transport ships came, and more were

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advised. One night, at nine o'clock, we were told by the naval authorities that it would be dangerous to remain after the next day, and that the military would leave at dawn to avoid capture. Leaving a native representative behind, we set off for Durazzo in the afternoon. Not many hours later the last fugitive had been removed by ship?

In all this work much help was received from M. Kamenarovitch, a Dalmatian gentleman.

The work of the agents of the Fund was by no means ended when the last shipload of refugees had sailed from Durazzo or Medua to Corsica.. From Valona, Mr. Fitzpatrick, grappling with great difficulties of transport, sent up food into the interior of Albania to meet some detachments of the Serbian Army which were retreating on that port, and supplied them with clothing and comforts on their arrival, Professor Bosanquet, in Corfu, took charge of the small boys and refugee camp-followers who reached that island with the troops, and made good use of a surplus of clothing which reached him to meet the needs of tattered soldiers. Mr. Ward accompanied a shipload of refugees from Corfu to Algeria, attended to the sick on the voyage, and reclothed them on their arrival. Those who had the good fortune to travel in French or British ships made the journey in comfortable and sympathetic conditions. Others fared



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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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worse, and would have endured intolerable sufferings had not agents of the Fund accompanied them. It is not expedient to give the details, but on one long and eventful voyage on two ships under the flags of other Powers, partly owing to bad organization and partly to a conflict of authority,; it was only the personal efforts of Mr. John E. Bellows and Miss Simmons that saved some hundreds of refugees from literal starvation.

The history of the- refugees from Serbian Macedonia who eventually reached Salonica was much less eventful than that of those who made the terrible journey on foot to the Adriatic. Most of them travelled by rail and gathered in the border towns of Greek Macedonia during November and the early days of December. Sir Edward Boyle arrived early in December and, acting in Sir Ralph Paget's absence. as British Commissioner, organized temporary help for the fugitives. There chanced to be in Salonica many doctors and nurses of the various British Hospitals which had been working in Serbia, and these, with some representatives of the Fund and the Society of Friends, at once gave themselves up to the work of relief. Dr. Finnegan and four nurses went up to Gjevgjelia, but had to leave as soon as they arrived, for the French troops were already evacuating it.. Dr. Vaughan and some helpers established a rest-house at Florina (the nearest town in Greek territory to Monastir), and remained there well into March. Here

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## Help of the Allies **after** the Great Retreat

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they received and treated an average of twenty-five fugitives nightly, chiefly soldiers of scattered detachments, who often arrived in a state of collapse from hunger or frostbite.

At Salonica station two tents were installed under Dr. Mary Blair and her nurses, where "first aid" was given to the refugees, who usually arrived by night trains. The policy of the Fund's workers was to keep the fugitives as long as possible in the up-country towns of Greek Macedonia, and thence to draft them gradually to Salonica. Here a big camp with a score of large marquee tents was pitched on open ground round the Russian Hospital outside the town. This camp had been originally installed by Princess Demidoff, of the Russian Legation in Athens. Since, she had only local workers at her disposal, she gladly handed over her camp to Mr. Innes and the workers of the Serbian Relief Fund, who, both at Salonica and afterwards in Corsica, worked in close co-operation with an admirable Serbian official, Dr. Djuritch. The camp was promptly organized, fenced in, and policed. The sanitation was managed by Mr. Banks, an American Red Cross specialist.

The big tents, with their double rows of beds varied by cots for the children, were soon comfortable and cheerful, and each was provided with a stove. The meals of the refugees were cooked in the hospital. In one tent the refugees as they arrived were reclothed,

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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if necessary, disinfected, and enabled to bath. In a hospital tent Drs. Finnegan and Hamilton attended to the sick, and another department, with the aid of M. Kouzmanovitch, a Serbian official, registered the new arrivals, allotted them to tents, and prepared passports for their departure. The population of the camp, which averaged about seven hundred, was nomadic, for as each ship left for Corsica, fresh bodies of refugees were brought down to Salohica. It called for capable organization and was a notable achievement in improvisation, but it was regarded from the first simply as a resting-place in the long emigration, from Serbia to Corsica. Two or three of our relief workers or nurses went with each batch of refugees on board the returning French transports to Ajaccio, to give them confidence and attend to their comfort on the journey. The camp was closed early in February and its office transferred to Ajaccio.

Salonica was at once too over-crowded and too insecure to serve as a site for a settlement in which the refugees could be cared for until Serbia is restored. The possibility of establishing colonies on one of the Ionian Islands, in Sicily, or in Cyprus was considered, and eventually the offer of the French Government to provide hospitality for all the-refugees on its own soil was accepted. The majority were sent to Corsica, some to Algeria, and a few to places in the South of France. The Serbian relief Fund -would have been

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## Help of the Allies. after the Great Retreat

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prepared to meet the full financial responsibility for the settlement in Corsica, but the generous offer of the French Government rendered this unnecessary, for it included not only lodging, but maintenance. The scope of the Fund's work in Corsica was limited by this condition, but there remained much useful and, indeed, necessary work which the French authorities left to the charge of the workers of the Relief Fund. To them fell the medical care of the refugees and the responsibility of clothing them.

It was also arranged between the Prefect of Corsica and Mr. Bellows that they should take over from the big institutions, in which the masses of the refugees were at first housed, all those whose degree of education and refinement demanded better conditions. The -- refugees, on their first arrival in Ajaccio, were all housed together in a big convent and a penitentiary, and as the arrangements had inevitably been made hurriedly, they involved some hardship and discomfort to the educated refugees, who formed the larger proportion of those from Salonica. Gradually this programme was carried out. The men capable of work as munition hands or as agricultural labourers were absorbed by local industries. The refugees of the middle class were accommodated in hotels, boarding-houses, and hired houses; under the supervision of the Fund's workers. To these the French authorities continued to pay an allowance for food and

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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lodging on the minimum scale, while the additional cost was borne by the Fund, whose workers managed the commissariat for those under their charge.

The little colonies which were, under the management of the Fund were grouped partly in big villas round Ajaccio and partly in the interior. The biggest settlement was at Bocagnano, a mountain summer resort, in which about half the houses were-hired, and it soon had the appearance of a village half Serbian and half Corsican. A small group of refugees was housed in a big hotel at Piana. These settlements at once began to organize a genial family life: Their Corsican neighbours were hospitable and generous and brought them gifts every day of fruit and other little luxuries; 'The national fete of Saint Sava was celebrated at Piana with the due rites of singing, dancing, speeches, and prayer, and the Corsican villagers were invited to share in it. The refugees were not idle. While the women attended to the household duties, the men began to dig and cultivate, the big garden of the hotel, and Miss Merz conducted classes for them in the evening. All this involved considerable and rather complicated organization for the purchase of food and its transport to the widely scattered colonies.

No time was lost in 'starting work to occupy the refugees. This was developed in such a way as to add to their efficiency, so that they would return to Serbia

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## Help of the Allies after the. Great Retreat

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with some permanent gain from their exile. The French authorities sent the boys and students to Lycees, where they received the best education that France can provide. For the women in Ajaccio Miss Bankart started] a workroom in which garments were made. Mr. Innes set up for the men a workroom in which- carpets were woven with the traditional Serbian designs.

D r . M a r y Blair, of the Scottish Ambulance, organized a hospital for the colony. At Bastia, Miss K. D. Courtney and some colleagues had the arduous task, in co-operation with the local committee, of caring for over two thousand refugees from the Adriatic coast, and here also a small- hospital was installed; Not the least valuable part of the work of the Fund was undertaken by Miss Margery Fry and other workers of the Fund, who settled in the quarantine station on the little island of Frioul, off Marseilles, and attended to the wants of -the refugees, more particularly clothing, on their first arrival.

In Corsica the refugees owed to the generosity of the French Government all the necessities of life, but the welcome which it extended to the workers of the Serbian Relief Fund enabled them to add immeasurably to the comfort and contentment of the exiles. In its whole work of relief the Fund was able to discharge a big task which fell naturally to its care. Its agents undoubtedly saved many hundreds of lives,

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## Through the Serbian Campaign

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particularly on the Adriatic coast, where no other organization was available to replace it. Elsewhere it was able to lessen the hardships and privations,; of a painful emigration and to alleviate the pain of exile' by sympathy and care.

**FINIS**

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